Dāna: Gift System in Ancient India
(*c*. 600 BC. - *c*. AD. 300)

A SOCIO-ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

VIJAY NATH

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Contents

Preface

The study of giftmaking as a form of distribution and exchange has recently been engaging the attention of western sociologists. Since dāna as a form of giftmaking is unique to Indian society, a study of its origins may provide interesting clues to the understanding of the Indian social ethos, specially in its formative stages. It may also reveal some new dimensions of the behavioural pattern of society.

The present work, which is based on my doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Delhi, deals with the institution mainly in the social and economic context, which seems to have a significant bearing on its continued viability and relevance to society. A wider view of the practice of dāna has therefore been taken and its analysis, covers both the brahmanical and the heterodox systems. The genesis of the institution lay not so much in the narrow religious beliefs and practices of a limited sectarian group as in the need for supporting social groups such as priests, monks, nuns etc.

Once dāna ceased to be reciprocal in the material sense, it continued to exist as such for centuries. But the nature of its constituent elements such as donor, donee and gift object was directly conditioned by the changing mode of material culture, which also affected the giftmaking procedure. Even the functional scope of dāna which played an important role in exchange, distribution and redistribution of social wealth, never remained constant. One is struck by the tremendous elasticity, flexibility and even a certain amount of universality of the institution.

The present study attempts to take advantage of the insights provided by various other social sciences. It is based not only on brahmanical and other literary works assigned to the period *c.* 600 BC to AD 300, but also contemporary epigraphic records and the data collected from anthropological field researches. It is hoped that the work will be of some use to those who are interested in the problems of distribution and exchange in ancient Indian society.

I have no words to express my gratitude and deep respect for Professor R.S. Sharma, who not only guided and supervised my

research work but was the main source of inspiration behind it. I am beholden to Shri Padmanabha Sarma of the Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, Delhi, for his unreserved help in the interpretation of certain original texts. My sincerest gratitude is also due to Professor D.N. Jha who all along took a keen interest in my work and went out of his way to be helpful to me. I am extremely indebted to Ms. Alpana Sharma and my student Ms. Shakti Madhok, who despite their busy teaching and examination schedule, helped me in preparing the index. Amongst my numerous friends and colleagues who helped me in countless ways, I would specially like to mention Dr. V.K. Jain, who as a fellow researcher was throughout a source of great moral support to me.

I shall be failing in my duty if I do not acknowledge my deep appreciation for all the help I received from the library staff of the Archaeological Survey of India and the National Museum, New Delhi. In this respect I would specially like to thank Ms. Pratibha Parashar, Shri Chaubey, Bholadutt and Thakar Singh of the National Museum Library for offering to me their unstinted cooperation throughout the course of my research work.

At the end I would like to candidly admit that the work would have never been completed but for the tremendous encouragement and support I received from my husband and the remarkable patience and understanding shown by my two daughters, who were very small at the time when I took up the research project.

VIJAY NATH

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Abbreviations

AA	*Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini
ABORI	*Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Poona
AISH	*Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations* by Romila Thapar
Ait. Br.	*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*
An Intro.	*An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* by D.D. Kosambi
Ang. Nik.	*Anguttara Nikāya*
Ant.	*Antiquity*, Cambridge
AO	*Archiv Orientalni*, Praha, Czechoslovakia
Āpas. Dh. Sūt.	*Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*
Āpas. Gṛ. Sūt.	*Āpastamba Gṛhyasūtra*
Āpas. Śr. Sūt.	*Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra*
APII	*Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India* by R.S. Sharma
AŚ	*Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya
ASI	Archaeological Survey of India
ASR	*American Social Review*
Āśva. Gṛ. Sūt.	*Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra*
Āśva. Śr. Sūt.	*Āśvalāyana Śrautasūtra*
ASWI	Archaeological Survey of Western India
AV	*Atharvaveda*
Baud. Dh. Sūt.	*Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*
Baud. Gṛ. Sūt.	*Baudhāyana Gṛhyasūtra*
Bh. Gītā	*Bhagavad Gītā*
Br. Smr.	*Bṛhaspati Smṛti*
Brahmins	*Brahmins Through the Ages: A Study of Their Social, Political, Religious and Economic Life* by R.N. Sharma
BV	*Bhāratiya Vidyā*, Bombay
CEHI	*The City in Early Historical India* by A. Ghosh

Ch. Up.	*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*
CHI	*Comprehensive History of India*, vol. II by K.A. Nilakanta Sastri
CII	*Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*
'Class Formation'	'Class Formation and its Material Basis in the Upper Gangetic Basin' by R.S. Sharma, *IHR*, II no. 1, 1975
'Conflict, Distribution and Differentiation'	'Conflict, Distribution and Differentiation in Ṛgvedic Society' by R.S. Sharma. *Pro. IHC*, 1977
CSAGR	*Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome* by A.R. Hands
CV	*Cullavagga*
Dh. Pada	*Dhammapada*
DHR	*Dialectics of Hindu Ritualism* by B.N. Datta
Dīg. Nik.	*Dīgha Nikāya*
DPR	*Dissent Protest and Reform in Indian Civilization*, ed., S.C. Malik, Simla, 1977
EI	*Epigraphia Indica*, Calcutta
EICCS	*Early Indian Coins and Currency System* by S.K. Maity
EIIC	*Early Indian Indigenous Coins*, ed., D.C. Sircar
ERE	*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed., James Hastings
EHS	*Essays in Honour of Prof. S.C. Sarkar*, Delhi, 1976
'Forms of Property'	'Forms of Property in the Early Portions of *Ṛgveda*' by R.S. Sharma, in *Essays in Honour of Prof. S.C. Sarkar*, Delhi, 1976
Gaut. Dh. Sūt.	*Gautama Dharma Sūtra*
'Gift and Giving'	'Gifts and Giving in the *Ṛgveda*' by J. Gonda, in *Selected Studies*, vol. IV, Leiden, 1975
Go. Br.	*Gopatha Brāhmaṇa*
Gobh. Gṛ. Sūt.	*Gobhila Gṛhyasūtra*
HD	*Hitopadeśa*
HIL	*A History of Indian Literature* by M. Winternitz, 2 vols.

Hir. Gṛ. Sūt.	*Hiraṇyakeśin Gṛhyasūtra*
Hist. Dh. S.	*History of Dharmaśāstra* by P.V. Kane
HS	*History and Society: Essays in Honour of Prof. N.R. Ray*, ed., D.P. Chattopadhyaya, Calcutta, 1978
IA	*Indian Antiquary*, Bombay
IB	*India of the Age of the Brāhamaṇas* by J. Basu
IC	*Indian Culture*, Calcutta
IDETBJ	*India as Described in Early Texts of Buddhism and Jainism* by B.C. Law
Pro. IHQ	*Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*
IHC	*Indian Historical Quarterly*, Calcutta
IHR	*Indian Historical Review*, Delhi
'Iron and Urbanization'	'Iron and Urbanization in the Ganga Basin by R.S. Sharma, *IHR*, I no. 1, 1974,
Jāt.	*Jātakas*
JAIH	*Journal of Ancient Indian History*, Calcutta
JASB	*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta
JASB (Bombay)	*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay*, Bombay
JASP	*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, Dacca
JBBRAS	*Journal of the Bombay Branch of Royal Asiatic Society*, Bombay
JBORI	*Journal of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Poona
JBORS	*Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Poona
JBPP	*Journal of the Bihar Pūravid Pariṣad*, Patna
JBRS	*Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, Patna,
JESHO	*Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Leiden
JIH	*Journal of Indian History*, Trivandrum
JM	*Jātakamālā*
JOIB	*Journal of the Oriental Institute of Baroda*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, London
JRASB	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta

Kāt. Smṛ.	*Kātyāyana Smṛti*
Kāt. Śr. Sūt.	*Kātyāyana Śrautasūtra*
KCEI	*Kingship and Community in Early India* by C. Drekmeier
Khad. Gṛ. Sūt.	*Khadira Gṛhyasūtra*
Khud. Nik.	*Khuddaka Nikāya*
KK.DK.	*Kṛtyakalpataru of Bhaṭṭa Lakṣmīdhara*, vol. V, *Dānakāṇḍa*, ed. K.V.R. Aiyangar
'Later Vedic Phase'	'The Later Vedic Phase and the Painted Grey Ware Culture' by R.S. Sharma, in *History and Society: Essays in Honour of Prof. Niharranjan Ray*, ed. D.P. Chattopadhyaya, Calcutta, 1978
Lüd.	*A List of Brahmi Inscriptions from the Earliest Times to about A.D. 400 with the Exception of Those of Aśoka* by H. Lüders
Maj. Nik.	*Majjhima Nikāya*
Manu	*Manusmṛti*
'Material Background'	'Material Background of the Origin of Buddhism' by R.S. Sharma, in *Das Kapital Century Volume*, ed. Mohit Sen and M.B. Rao, Delhi, 1968
MB	*Mahābodhi*, Calcutta
Mbh.	*Mahābhārata*
MI	*Man In India*, Calcutta
Milinda	*Milindapañho*
'Monastic Economy'	'The Monastic Economy and Eradication of Beggary in Ancient India' by Basudeva Upadhyaya, *JBRS*, LIV, 1968
MV	*Mahāvagga*
Nār. Smṛ	*Nārada Smṛti*
NBP	North Black Polished Ware
Painted Grey Ware	*The Painted Grey Ware: An Iron Age Culture of Northern India* by Vibha Tripathi
Pāras Gṛ. Sūt.	*Pāraskara Gṛhyasūtra*
P.E.	Pillar Edict of Aśoka
PGW	Painted Grey Ware
PLR	*Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Societies* by Max Gluckman
PO	*Poona Orientalist*, Poona

'Priests'	'The Priests in the Vedic Age' by J. Muir *JRAS*, vol. II, 1866
'Problems of Social Formation'	'Problems of Social Formations in Early India' by R.S. Sharma, Presidential Address, *Pro. IHC*, 1975
PTS	Pali Text Society
PV	*Petavatthu*
QRHS	*Quarterly Review of Historical Studies*, Calcutta
Rāmā.	*Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki
R.E.	Rock Edict of Aśoka
Religion and Culture	*Religion and Culture: An Introduction to Anthropology of Religion* by A.W. Malafijt
Rev. Sys.	*Revenue System in Post-Maurya and Gupta Times* by D.N. Jha
Rural Urban Economy	*The Rural Urban Economy and Social Changes in Ancient India* by Jaimal Rai
ṚV	*Ṛgveda*
Saṁ. Nik.	*Saṁyukta Nikāya*
Śānkh. Gṛ. Sūt	*Śānkhyāyana Gṛhya Sūtra*
Śānkh. Śr. Sūt.	*Śānkhyāyana Śrauta Sūtra*
Śat. Br.	*Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa*
SBB	*Sacred Books of the Buddhists*
SBE	*Sacred Books of the East*
SBH	*Sacred Books of the Hindus*
SFPS	*Structure and Function in Primitive Society* by A.R. Radcliffe Brown
SI	*Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization*, vol. I, by D.C. Sircar
Soc. Org.	*Social Organisation in North East India in Buddha's Time* by Richard Fick
Socio-Pol. Study	*A Socio-Political Study of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* by Ramashraya Sharma
'Some Aspects'	'Some Aspects of the Economic Data in the *Mahābhārata*' by Romila Thapar *ABORI*, Diamond Jubilee Volume, 1978
'Some Problems'	'Some Problems of the Social Structure of Ancient India' by G.M. Bongard-Levin, in *History and Society: Essays in Honour of*

	Prof. N.R. Ray, ed. D.P. Chattopadhyaya, Calcutta, 1978
Selected Studies	*Selected Studies* by J. Gonda, vol. IV, *History of Ancient Indian Religion*, Leiden, 1975
Sut. Nip	*Sutta Nipāta*
Tai. Br.	*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*
Tai. Saṁ.	*Taittirīya Saṁhitā*
Travals	*The Travels of Fa-hsien or Record of the Buddhistic World*, tr. H.A. Giles
Vaś. Dh. Sūt.	*Vaśiṣṭha Dharma Sūtra*
VI	*Vedic Index* by Macdonell and Keith
VIJ	*Viśveshvaranand Indological Journal*, Hoshiarpur
Vinays	*Vinaya Piṭaka*
Viṣ Smṛ	*Viṣṇu Smṛti*
VV	*Vimānavatthu*
Yāj. Smṛ.	*Yājñavalkya Smṛti*

Introduction

Altruism as a human virtue is universally acclaimed. In the Jewish texts it is regarded as one of the pillars of the world.[1] Ancient Hindu lawgivers too were always cognizant of the spiritual merit arising from the act of dāna. So much importance was attached to it as a primary social need that it came to be assigned an exalted place in the rituals of the time. No religious ceremony was deemed complete without it; no act of religious devotion was considered fruitful unless accompanied by it. Charity was sought to be inculcated as the cardinal virtue, through which all sins could be atoned for and which held the key to the highest heaven. Voluminous laudatory texts on dāna were composed, and entire sections devoted to its detailed procedures were added to the Hindu law-books. An institution which received so much importance in the religion of a people as to become a second nature with them must have held some basic and vital relevance to the functioning of their social and economic lives.

It is surprising, therefore, that not a single monograph treats the subject exclusively. Of course it has received attention in some writings, but the treatment does not seem to be adequate or exhaustive and is generally confined to a particular source.

P.V. Kane's *History of Dharmaśāstra*, is the first major work on the subject of dāna. In part two of its second volume a whole chapter is devoted to 'dāna'. P.V. Kane in his meticulous fashion has touched all important facets of this institution as they emerge from the Dharmaśāstric texts. He deals with the various procedural rules and regulations developed and prescribed by the ancient lawgivers. But he mainly discusses the institution as outwardly reflected in the *Dharmaśastras*, and generally ignores the various socio-economic forces working behind this popular social practice.

K.V.R. Aiyangar's commentary on Lakṣmidhara's work the Dāna kāṇḍa of the *Kṛtyakalpataru* is an important study, in which a detailed and very exhaustive bibliography of all the available original sources

[1]J. Hastings, ed., *ERE*, vol. III, p. 390.

pertaining to dāna, both literary and epigraphic, is given. Aiyangar traces the growth of the institution from the earliest times and briefly tries to go into some basic questions, but the discussion lacks comprehensive assessment of the available data.

The *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* edited by James Hastings contains a survey of the practice of charity in the primitive, Jewish, Biblical, Christian, Greek, Roman, Buddhist and Hindu societies. Though sufficiently informative from a lay reader's point of view, the survey remains essentially brief and cursory.

Evidently although the subject of ritual dāna has all along engaged sporadic attention of Indologists such as A.B Keith, R.C. Hazra,[1] a more comprehensive treatment of dāna or giftmaking as a major social institution was never attempted. However, on the turn of the fifties, the subject of landgrants as a factor in building up feudal relations during Gupta and post-Gupta period came up for serious and animated discussion at the hands of D.D. Kosambi,[2] R.S. Sharma,[3] D.C. Sircar[4] and many subsequent scholars such as Pushpa Niyogi,[5] B.N.S. Yadav[6] etc. Whereas in his book *Indian Feudalism*, R.S. Sharma has exhaustively gone into the purpose and effects of landgrants on political economy of the time, in his subsequent writings also such as 'Social Changes in Early Medieval India,[7] and 'Class Formation and its Material Basis in the Upper Gangetic Basin', the importance of giftmaking institution as a factor in social developments is repeatedly emphasised.

The renewed interest evinced by Indian scholars in the institution

[1]R.C. Hazra, *Studies in the Purāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs*. R.C. Hazra while accounting for the depressed socio-economic position of the brāhmaṇas during the Purāṇic age, and the measures they adapted to redress it, mentions the institution as being, one of the chief weapons used by them.

[2]D.D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*; 'On the Development of Feudalism in India', *ABORI*, vol. 36, 1955.

[3]R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism c.* A.D. 300-1200.

[4]D.C. Sircar, *Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Medieval India as Revealed by Epigraphical Records*; *Studies in the Political and Administrative Systems in Ancient and Medieval India.*

[5]Pushpa Niyogi, *Contributions to the Economic History of Northern India from 10th to 12th cent A.D.*

[6]B.N.S. Yadav, 'Secular Landgrants of the Post-Gupta Period and Some Aspects of the Growth of Feudal Complex in Northern India', *Land System and Feudalism in Ancient India*, ed. D.C. Sircar.

[7]R.S. Sharma. 'Social Changes in Early Medieval India *c.* A.D. 500-1200', *The Frst Devraj Chanana Memorial Lecture*, 1969.

of dāna as practised in ancient times may be, in fact, attributed to anthropological field-researches conducted in the wake of Darwin's famous theory of law of mutual aid[1] which was further expounded also by Kessler[2] and Petr Kropotkin.[3] In the first five decades of the present century, some eminent sociologists undertook the study of various primitive cultures with a view to analysing and assessing the role of giftmaking in tribal societies. Giftmaking as a means of redistribution of social wealth or as a mode of exchanging goods in a pre-market economy found its best exponents in Malinowski,[4] Marcel Mauss,[5] Raymond Firth[6], Emily Durkheim,[7] Evans Pritchard[8], and Melville J. Herskovits.[9] The importance attached to giftmaking in the context of cultural anthropology may be gauged from the fact that most recent sociologists have treated the subject in their respective works. In this connection, the names of Lucy Mair,[10] Erich Fromm[11] Max Gluckman,[12] and Erik Schwimmer[13] may be specially mentioned. A noted work on the subject of charity and social aid in Greece and Rome which has recently come out is that by A.R. Hands.[14]

It was, however, Marcel Mauss' memorable work *Essai sur le don, forme archaique de' l'é change*,[15] which for the first time focused the attention of sociologists on giftmaking as a form of redistribution and exchange. In his book Mauss has probed deep and exhaustively into the sociological beginnings of this widely prevalent custom. He has treated the subject with reference to some great civilizations of the past and has also referred to the Indian practice as it prevailed during the centuries preceding the Christian era to which he devotes a section of a chapter. Keeping in view the magnitude of the

[1]Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man.*

[2]Kessler, *The Law of Mutual Aid.*

[3]Petr Kropotkin, *Matual Aids a Factor of Evolution.*

[4]B. Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific.*

[5]Marcel Mauss, *Essai sur le don, forme archaique de l'ē change.*

[6]Raymond Firth, *Primitive Polynesian Economy.*

[7]Emily Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life.*

[8]Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer.*

[9]Melville J. Herskovits, *Economic Anthropology.*

[10]Lucy Mair, *An Introduction to Social Anthropology.*

[11]Erich Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness.*

[12]Max Gluckman, *Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society.*

[13]Erik Schwimmer, 'Reciprocity and Structure', *Man*, XIV, no. 2, p. 271.

[14]A.R. Hands, *Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome.*

[15]M. Mauss, op. cit.

data he was dealing with, his observations with regard to the Indian institution are necessarily brief and based primarily on brahmanical texts. Other sources such as inscriptions and secular as well as heterodox canonical texts have not been examined by him.

Nevertheless, it was the translation of Mauss's work by I.C. Cunnison published in 1954 with the title *The Gift*,[1] which made his views easily accessible to the English knowing scholars dealing with ancient India and made them review the institution of dāna more as a form of exchange and redistribution. A couple of monographs exclusively dealing with the subject have been published. The one by J. Gonda[2] is an excellent sociological study, in which through etymological discussion of various terms used in the sense of 'gift' or 'giving' in the *Ṛgveda*, he seeks to assess the role of 'giftmaking in building and sustaining social relationships. Motives for giftmaking during the Ṛgvedic period receive adequate treatment. However, in view of the study being confined only to the *Ṛgveda*, the subsequent growth and changes overtaking the institution find no place in Gonda's study. Moreover, he does not try to corelate his sociological findings to the existing political and economic order. The subject of gift also finds fairly detailed exposition in Gonda's book *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*.[3]

Romila Thapar's monograph *Dāna and Dakṣiṇā as Forms of Exchange*, on the other hand, is a more comprehensive treatment of the subject. She marshals considerable evidence to demonstrate that giftmaking in ancient times was an important social and economic function. Important questions pertaining to the functional utility of the institution have been raised and considered, especially in the context of Mauss's sociological findings. Her thrust, however, has been mainly on dāna and dakṣiṇā as forms of exchange, during the Vedic and early post-Vedic period.

But in spite of valuable insights provided by some studies noted above so far we have no work covering exhaustively the various socio-economic aspects of the institution of dāna, especially during the post-Vedic period, when the institution passed through a period of change and elaboration.

Copious amount of source material for the study of the subject exists in epigraphic records and literary writings. But whereas inscrip-

[1]M. Mauss, *The Gift*, tr. Ian Cunnison,
[2]J. Gonda, 'Gifts and Giving in the *Ṛgveda*', *Selected Studies*, vol. IV, pp. 122ff.
[3]J. Gonda, *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*, New Delhi, 1985.

tions sometimes contains dates and the form of writing also helps us in dating them, literary works create more problems. It becomes difficult to date and use those texts in which several centuries intervene between the time of their composition and that of their final written compilation. Legendry accretions, didactic interpolations and even amendments at the hands of subsequent writers and copyists not only undermine the authenticity of such texts but also render the task of dating them formidable. We are naturally faced with the problem of determining whether these texts can be referred to the period when they are traditionally known to have been composed or to the time when their final redaction took shape.

Prominent amongst this category of texts whose date of composition continue to be controversial are the *Jātakas*,[1] the two epics the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, collections of folk-tales especially the *Pañcatantra* and the *Hītopadeśa*. The date of the actual composition of the *Jātakas* is still not known, even though their stories in the form of popular folk-tales existed as early as the second century B.C., when they were given sculptural representation in the bas-reliefs of Sānchi and Bharhut[2]. The date of the composition of the *Mahābhārata* on the other hand is supposed to have stretched over a long period of some eight centuries i.e., from the fourth century B.C. to the fourth century A.D.[3] Moreover, while the narrative-sections of the *Mahābhārata* seem to be of early composition, and recall tribal traditions of the later Vedic period, its didactic portions are generally considered to be late additions. Similarly, the composition of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is supposed to have taken place in two suceessive stages. While its final redaction is known to exist by second century A.D.,[4] its original text i.e., Books II to VI, are generally believed to have been composed by Vālmīki some time between the fifth century B.C. and the third century B.C.[5] Since it is supposed to be based on tradition in the form of ballads much older than the time of its original composition, we have used the text more with reference to the pre-Mauryan phase than for the subsequent period.

The *Jātaka* and the *Mahābhārata*, throwing light on the operative aspect of dāna making, may be taken to cover almost the entire

[1]M. Winternitz, op.cit., vol. II, p. 122.
[2]Ibid, vol. II, p. 120.
[3]Ibid, vol. I, p. 475.
[4]Ibid, vol. I, p. 516.
[5]Ibid, p. 517; Arthur A. Macdonell, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 311.

breadth of the period under study. Nevertheless, as suggested by R.S. Sharma,[1] since economic conditions reflected in the *Jātakas* seem to fit better with conditions known to be prevailing during the centuries preceding the Christian era, hence we have used this source more for the earlier half of the period from the sixth century B.C. to the third century A.D. then for the later half. References to ostentatious offerings made at the *Rājasūya* or other great *Soma* sacrifices, which find mention in the Sabhā Parva of the *Mahābhārata*, are taken to refer to later Vedic and early post-Vedic times, and the aphorisms on dāna contained especially in the Anuśāsana and Śānti Parvas, are supposed to have greater bearing on the post-Mauryan situation.

Uncertainty of authorship as well as dates due to more or less similar reasons seems to exist regarding almost all major brahmanical and heterodox canonical texts composed during the centuries preceding the Christian era. In view of the above problem we have accepted the broad dating suggested by certain well-known authorities on the subject such as M. Winternitz, B.C. Law and P.V. Kane.

For the period beginning from the age of the Buddha (sixth century B.C.) up to the foundation of the Mauryan empire (the last quarter of the fourth century B.C.) no inscriptions are available. However an extensive literature in Sanskrit and Pāli, of both brahmanical and heterodox origin, reflects the state of affairs during this period. Significantly, Sanskrit language during this period was still in its early stages of development and was being cast within a grammatical framework. This fact has proved useful in our study of evolution and growth of the institution of dāna. An analysis of different terms used for giftmaking at different points of times as well as multiple shades of meaning in which the two terms dāna and dakṣiṇa are used in the literature of the period help us to understand the functional scope of the giftmaking institution. In this respect two works on etymology and grammar, which have proved of special value, are Yāska's *Nirukta* (dated roughly between 700 to 500 B.C.)[2] and Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyi* (assigned around 400 B.C.).[3] Pāṇini's work, in fact, also furnishes certain important details which are useful in the reconstruction of the contemporary social and economic background.

To the pre-Mauryan period are also attributed the numerous

[1]R.S. Sharma, *Śūdras in Ancient India*, p. 85.
[2]Winternitz, op. cit., vol. I, p. 69.
[3]V.S. Agrawala, *India as Known to Pāṇini*, p. 474.

brahmanical texts which are generally regarded to have been composed some time between 600 and 300 B.C.[1] In this category the texts which provide special insight into the process working behind the formalization of the institution of dāna may be mentioned the principle *Śrauta Sūtras* of Āśvalāyana, Katyāyana and Śānkyāyana; the *Gṛhya Sūtras* of Āśvalāyana, Āpastamba and Pāraskara, and the *Dharmaśāstras* of Gautama, Baudhāyana and Āpastamba.[2] The *Vāsiṣṭha Dhramāśūtras* is considered to be of a some what later date[3] than the other three *Dharmasūtras*. Similarly, Khadira, Gobhila and Hiraṇyakeṣin *Gṛhyasūtras*, are assigned a fairly late composition, although they are based upon earlier *gṛhyasūtra* texts. They have, therefore, been used broadly for the centuries preceding the Christian era. For our study of theoretical principles, ritualistic procedures and beliefs connected with the act of dāna, these early *Sūtra* texts prove of immense value. Another text which is also taken to roughly belong to this period is Jaimini's *Pūrva Mimāṁsā* (500-200 B.C.).[4]

It is, however, to the very extensive heterodox Pāli literature that we actually owe a fuller knowledge of the social and economic background which contributed to the growing popularity of the gift-making institution. Amongst the Buddhist texts which throw light on the popular functioning of dāna during the early centuries after the Buddha may be mentioned the four collections of the *Sutta-Piṭaka*, compiled in the form of *Nikāyas* (dialogues) viz., the *Dīgha*, the *Majjhima*, the *Saṁyutta* and the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*.[5] The *Vinaya-piṭaka* comprising *Patimokkha*, *Mahāvagga* and *Cūllavagga* are also taken to be of pre-Mauryan origin.[6]

For the subsequent period of the Mauryas we have at our disposal certain sources, the dates of which have occasioned a fair amount of controversy. These sources range from Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* to a series of Aśoka's edicts inscribed on pillars, rocks and wall-facings, sometime between 274 to 230 B.C. The latter constitute our first major source whose authenticity cannot be doubted. But even in the

[1]P.V. Kane, *Hist. Dh. S.*, vol. I, pt. I, p. 13; Louis Renou, *Vedic India*, p. 42; J. Gonda, The Ritual Sūtra, *History of Indian Literature*, Wiesbaden, pp. 476-78.
[2]See the Chronological table given in P.V. Kane's *Hist. Dh. S.*, vol. II, pt. I, p. XI.
[3]Cf. Rapson, *Cambridge History of India*, vol. I, p. 249.
[4]S. N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. I, p. 370.
[5]B.C. Law, *A History of Pāli Literature*, vol. I, p. 274.
[6]Ibid, p. 16; G. S. P. Misra, *The Age of Vinaya*, p. 34.

case of the *Arthaśāstra,* despite all the dispute centring around its authorship and date (which is considered by extremists to be as late as A.D. 300,[1] its primary kernel is still believed to belong to the Mauryan period.[2] As such the text has been used extensively for getting information regarding the changed political and economic order in general, and the giftmaking institution in particular during the time of the Mauryas. Another text which supplies certain indirect bits of information are fragments from the account left by Megasthenes.

Other sources for the Mauryan period comprise the *Khuddaka* section of the *Sutta Piṭaka.*[3] Besides the *Jātakas,* some of the important *Khuddaka* texts utilised for our study are, *Vimānavatthu, Itivutthaka, Petavatthu, Udāna, Sutta-Nipāta, Theragāthā, Therīgāthā, Khuddaka Pāṭha, and Dhammapada.* These texts throw useful light on new categories of donors and donees which emerged at this time and added a new dimension to the giftmaking institution.

The original composition of the Jaina canon also is supposed to have taken place towards the end of the fourth or the beginning of the third century B.C.,[4] even though according to a unanimous tradition, its final redaction took shape only at the Valabhi council in A.D.[5] 454. Relying on the dating suggested by Jacobi we have, therefore, taken the *Jaina Sūtras* to reflect conditions prevailing during the centuries preceding the Christian era.

For the post-Mauryan period, on the other hand, we seem to be chronologically on more definite grounds. This is mainly due to a large number of inscriptions in the shape of royal *praśastis,* votive records of gifts of images, pillars, doorways etc. as well as epigraphic records of landgrants. These inscriptions naturally constitute a more reliable source of information regarding new categories of gift-items. Moreover our study of the donor categories figuring prominently at this time is greatly facilitated by rough statistical data which can be collected from votive records found at Mathurā, Sānchi, Kārle, Kudā etc. The inscriptions of the Cheti King Khāravela and other Śaka, Kuṣāṇa and Sātavāhana rulers have also proved immensely useful for the purpose of not only reconstructing the economic and political

[1]Cf. R. Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas,* pp. 218-25.
[2]Kalyanov, 'Dating the *Arthaṣāstra', Proceeding of the XXIII Orientalists Congress,* Cambridge, pp. 40-54, vide R.S. Sharma, *Śūdras in Ancient India,* p. 146.
[3]M. Winternitz, op.cit., vol. II, p. 76.
[4]H. Jacobi, *Jaina Sūtra, SBE,* vol. XXII, intro., p. XLIII.
[5]Ibid., p. XXXVII; See also J.C. Sikdar's *Studies in the Bhagavati Sūtra,* p. 38.

background of the post-Maurya period but also for the study of changes in the mode of giftmaking.

Besides epigraphic sources certain literary texts are also forthcoming whose datings have been fixed with fair certainty. Prominent amongst them are the *Milindapañho* (first century A.D.)[1] and Pātañjali's *Mahābhāsya* 150 B.C.).[2] To this period also belong the three earliest *Smṛti* works, namely those by Manu (*c.* 200 B.C. to A.D. 200), Yājñavalkya (A.D. 100 to 303.) and Nārada (A.D. 100 to 400).[3] The *Smṛtis* of Viṣṇu and Kātyāyana if not belonging to this period, at least cannot be dated much later. The importance of these *Dharmaśāstra* texts as a source of information for the giftmaking institution of course cannot be over-estimated.

Certain texts which are known to belong to the period immediately following *c.* A.D. 300 occasionally supplement our knowledge of the post-Mauryan phase. To this category belong the travel account left by Fa-hien (A.D. 412), the *Mahāvastu* (4th cent. A.D.)[4] and the *Jātakamālā* by Āryasūra (4th cent. A.D.).[5] Even the two collections of popular fables and animal tales, the *Hitopadeśa* and *Pañcatantra,*[6] which cannot be definitely dated, may be taken to be reminiscent of traditions dating back to the period under study.

An extensive literature in the shape of *nibandhas* on dāna was composed from the tenth century A.D. Some noted works are Lakṣmīdhara's *Dānakalpataru,* Ballālasena's *Dānasāgara,* Hemādri's *Dānakhaṇḍa,* Chandeśvara's *Dānaratnākara,* Viśvabhaṭṭa's *Dānasāra,* Govindānanda's *Dānakriyākaumudi,* and Bhaṭṭa Nilakaṇṭha's *Dānamāyūkha.* The list of course is much more formidable and is given for reference in K.V.R. Aiyangar's introduction to the Dānakāṇḍa of the *Kṛtyakalpataru* by Lakṣmīdhara. These digests on dāna do not cover the period under review and therefore could not be much utilised in the present study. Nevertheless the tendency on the part of these manual writers to quote profusely from the earlier texts such as *Dharmaśāstras* has been of great help, especially for the study of procedural form related to dāna. Some of the findings in the present

[1]M. Winternitz, op. cit., vol. II, p. 175.
[2]Cf. B.N. Puri, *India in the Time of Pātañjali,* pp. 6-15.
[3]P.V. Kane, *Hist. Dh.S.,* vol. II. pt. I, pp. XI-XII.
[4]M. Winternitz, op. cit., vol. II, p. 247.
[5]Ibid, p. 276.
[6]Cf. S.N. Dasgupta and S.K. De, *History of Sanskrit Literature*—Classical Period, vol. I, p. 87.

study have also been sought to be illuminated by current Anthropological studies.

The present study, thus seeks to examine certain basic questions related to the continued popularity of the institution of dāna through centuries of social change and economic transition. For example what exactly is comprehended by the terms dāna and dakṣiṇā at different points of time? Why and how did the institution acquire its rigid formalised character? How far was the development linked with changes in material culture? What was the relevance of the institution to ancient society? Whether the institution affected the social and economic order in any significant manner?

CHAPTER 1

Concepts of Distribution and Redistribution and Meaning of Dāna

Giftmaking according to Anthropologists, in its various aspects of mutual aid, redistribution and exchange was central to the economic functioning of all early societies. As one Anthropologist puts it, "The economies of egalitarian societies are primarily organised through reciprocity; those of rank societies through redistribution, and those of stratified societies through market exchange[1]." Giftmaking according to them is never a one-way process. It always entails reciprocation. All gifts though in theory voluntary, disinterested and spontaneous are in fact, obligatory and interested.[2]

The origins of giftmaking institution can be traced back to the period of savagery when it existed in the form of mutual aid. According to Darwin[3], Petr Kropotkin[4] and Kessler mutual aid formed an important part of the evolutionary process, for man's physical weakness can be counter-balanced only through his intellectual faculties and social qualities which lead him to give and receive aid from fellowmen. Mutual aid in the form of joint hunting expeditions or even agricultural operations provides some security to the life of the primitive man.[5] He shares the existing surplus food in the hope of its being returned in his own hour of need.[6] The vestiges of this practice may still be seen in the tribal life today. "The Bhils of Western India help one another in sowing and harvesting. They borrow cattle on reciprocal basis for ploughing the fields".[7]

[1]Serena Nanda, *Cultural Anthropology*, p. 176.
[2]Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 1.
[3]Darwin, *Descent of Man*, p. 63.
[4]Petr Kropotkin, 'Mutual aid as a law of nature and a factor of evolution,' vide *ERE*, vol. III, p. 376.
[5]Kessler, 'The law of mutual aid' vide *ERE*, vol. III, p. 376.
[6]Erich Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, p. 15.
[7]L.P. Vidyarthi and B.K. Rai, *The Tribal Culture of India*, p. 106.

Against the background of pastoral economy combined with shifting agriculture, giftmaking may also be seen in its altogether different aspect of redistribution of communal wealth. In the absence of the growth of personal property, wealth is presumed to have been accumulated not for the benefit of an individual but in the interest of a collective group.[1] This naturally gives rise to the need for periodical distribution of wealth owned in common by the whole group. War being one of the chief source of such wealth in a pastoral order, distribution can be made only of the spoils. Accordingly the work of distribution devolves more than the tribal assembly, on the military chief who initially owns the spoils of war and later distributes them in the form of gifts.

In an economic order marked by rudimentary developments in the field of private ownership of property, surplus production and money market, giftmaking may serve the totally different purpose of exchange of goods, especially on an inter-tribal level. According to Marcel Mauss, "Spirit of gift exchange is characteristic of societies, which have not yet reached the state of pure individual contract, the money market, sale proper, fixed price and weighted and coined money".[2] Such giftmaking is necessarily marked by its reciprocal character. But besides exchange giftmaking serves also as the chief means of acquiring social status, more especially in an economy in which "gain or prestige comes through expenditure rather than through saving".[3] In the context of prestige economy therefore gift-exchange is also characterised by a strong competitive spirit. The latter involves a lavish display of wealth through gift distribution on ceremonial occasions such as sacrifice. A form of such gift-distribution survives in the custom of *potlatch*[4] still widely practised by tribes of Northwest America. Originally a feast given with the expectation of return, *potlatch* is a ceremony involving large scale distribution of gifts by a tribal chief acting as the host to other chiefs and their kinsmen. "It is a squandering match, a direct challenge to those who are now obliged to repay with equal munificence or else endure a loss of

[1]Morgan River, "Lands as yet hardly a subject of property were owned by the tribes in common," quoted by Morgan, *Ancient Society*, p. 537.

[2]Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 45.

[3]Melville J. Herskovits, *Cultural Anthropology*, p. 164.

[4]A Chinook term; defined in *Webster's Third International Dictionary*, An ostentatious distribution of gifts that entails elaborate reciprocation.

prestige and power in the clan or tribe".[1] The spirit of rivalry and antagonism, which render reciprocation obligatory, makes *potlatch* an effective means of not only asserting personal power but also of keeping goods in circulation in an economy where the better medium of money exchange is lacking.

But even in a commercially more advanced economy, giftmaking does not entirely cease to play a distributive role. On the contrary in a stratified social order, giftmaking in the form of charity and religious benefaction may be found to serve as an instrument of diverting some of the surplus concentrated in the hands of the very rich towards the poor and the economically non-producing sections of society. As such giftmaking to some extent may even act like a levelling mechanism which forces "accumulated resources or capital to be used in ways that do not result in significant or permanent differences."[2] It may thus become an important means of a more equitable redistribution of social wealth in a non-egalitarian society.

Etymological Meaning of Dāna and Dakṣiṇā

Dāna and dakṣiṇā in the present context primarily denote ritualistic gift-offerings to religious beneficiaries especially to brāhmaṇa priests, mendicants and other religious institutions. But even charitable endowments which are often accompanied by some amount of ceremonialism are also characterised as dāna. Dāna as such would seem to lack the dual elements of spontaneity and reciprocity. Its unilateral[3] and predominantly religious aspect clearly distinguishes it from spontaneous or ceremonial gifts (*prīti dāna*) exchanged by friends and relatives.

In the Vedic and post-Vedic literature, however, dāna and dakṣiṇā appear to have held a wider and more flexible connotative inflexion which is not easy to define. A semantic study of the two terms, therefore, becomes a desideratum. It may give an insight into the changing aspect and functional viability of dāna vis-a-vis the changing social order.

Dāna in the Vedic Context

Although the word dāna occurs repeatedly in the *Ṛgveda* and other

[1]C. Drekmeier, *Kingship and Community in Early India*, p. 47.

[2]Serena Nanda, *Cultural Anthropology*, p. 169.

[3]*'Pārasparasya dānāni lokayātrānadharmavat'*—'Reciprocal gifts are not gifts: they are sinful', *KK, DK*, intro, p. 76.

Vedic texts, its meaning remains at best ambiguous and illusive. We also come across several other terms which are used to describe a liberal person. For example *sudātā* was an epithet applied to Tvaṣṭr because he distributed wealth among his worshippers.[1] *Anarsarti* denoted the person whose gifts were not unpleasant.[2] *Dravindā* was the giver of wealth[3] and *dravinasah* denoted the person who sat down to distribute wealth.[4]

It is in the *Nighanṭu*, a glossary of rare and obscure words compiled sometime towards the close of the Vedic period (*c.* 7th cent. B.C.)[5] on which Yāska later based his *Niruktam* (*c.* 5th cent. B.C.),[6] that the exact connotation of dāna is brought out for the first time through such vide ranging synonyms as *dāti, dāṣati, rati, rāsati, maṁhati, tuṁjhati, priṅāti, priṅakṣati* and *śikṣati*. The word *rati*, literally means to be liberal or generous. Even the word *rayi* (wealth) literally means the object to be given to others.[7] The use of *rati* as a synonym for dāna therefore, would underline its ostentatious character. Incidentally two very common terms which occur in the *Ṛgveda* are *māgham* (bounty) and *māghavan* (generous giver).[8] The word *māgham* is derived from the root *mahma* meaning to give.[9] Giving gift is described as *māgha-daya*.[10] This shows that dāna in the Vedic context not only presupposed possession of excessive bounty by the donor but it was also expected to win fame and prestige for him.

Similarly *dāti* means to give or to distribute. As shown elsewhere[11] in the absence of money economy based on sale and purchase, dāna appears from the *Ṛgveda* to have served as one of the chief means of wealth distribution amongst the tribe.[12]

[1] *RV*, VIII. 99. 4; *AV*, XX, 58. 2.
[2] *AV*, XX. 58. 2.
[3] *RV*, I. 15. 7.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Winternitz, *HIL*, I, pp. 69-70.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Brajdeo Prasad Rao, *The Later Vedic Economy*, p. 51.
[8] *Vedic Index*, II, p. 118 Māghavān is the regular name for the generous giver of bounties to priests.
[9] Brajdeo Prasad Rao, op. cit., p. 52.
[10] *RV*, VII. 67, 9; X. 156. 2.
[11] Infra, The place of dāna in economy, Chap. 9.
[12] The distribution, however, cannot be expected to have been equal. As R.S. Sharma holds, The lion's share went to priests in lieu of the prayers they offered to gods on behalf of their patrons. This suggests that distribution benefitted the higher segments of society. 'Forms of property,' *EHS*, p. 101.

The word *dāsati* means to give, or offer oblation. The synonyms *priṇāti* or *priṇakṣati* also convey the sense of to please or propitiate. In the Vedic literature since dāna was closely associated with big sacrifices[1] and the recipients were mostly sacerdotal priests, it may have to some extent also borne the aspect of sacrificial oblation.[2]

But perhaps the most significant synonym of dāna given in the *Nighanṭu* is *tuṁjhati*, It seemingly has more than one meaning. One lexical meaning of *tuṁjhati* is to guard, protect or cherish. With reference to dāna it can signify only that such giftmaking on the part of the tribal chiefs was meant to directly nourish and provide for the tribe. The other meaning of *tuṁjhāti* is to reach out, or to flow forth. According to Gonda this was very definitely one of the inflexions of dāna. "Giving demands a gift not in the sense of any commercial rationalism but because the gift allows a stream to flow from giver to receiver and from receiver to donor".[3] This is no doubt one of the reasons why the importance of dāna is underlined in a verse of the *Tattiriya Āraṇyaka*. "Everything rests on dāna. Through it those who hate become friends."[4]

Even *maṁhati*, another synonym for dāna is used in the *Ṛgveda* in the dual sense of "to give or to grow or increase. That dāna was expected to bring greater prosperity for the donor is apparent from the following hymn, "Bounteous is he who gives unto the beggar who comes to him in want of food and feeble. Success attends him in the shout of battle. He makes a friend of him in future troubles."[5] The idea finds greater exposition in the *Dharmaśāstra* texts.

Although the other meaning of *tuṁjhati* is to kill, hurt or injure, we have not enough evidence to show that dāna like *potlatch* was also an aggressive act against a rival, an attempt to outdo him. But since even *dāti* also means to cut or to destroy, it has to be conceded that at least in the pre-monetary tribal order of the Vedic period—dāna bore an aspect which could not have been very different from prestation in all tribal societies.

[1] *RV*, V. 20. 7-8, 15.7; 1.121, 15.
[2] *VI*, vol. I, p. 350, Dāna seems in several passages of the *Ṛgveda* to be designation of the sacrificial feast to which the god is invited, *RV*, I.55.7; I.180.5; VIII. 46. 24.
[3] J. Gonda, 'Gift and giving', *SS*, pp. 132-33.
[4] Vide, *KK. DK*, intro., p. 68.
[5] *RV*, X. 117.

Dāna in the Post-Vedic Context:

By the time of Pāṇinī (*c.*5th cent. B.C.)[1] certain important developments in the material culture had already taken place. Literary evidence backed by archaeology shows that agrarian economy based on money-market had effectively superseded the pastoral culture of the early Vedic age. Private property had emerged as an important factor in the evolving social order. Dāna in the new context naturally acquired a different connotative significance. This is effectively borne out by the numerous grammatical formations of dāna suggested by Pāṇini.

Pāṇini has laid down not one i.e. the generally known root, √ *dā dāne*, but several other roots from which the term may derive its origin,[2] Accordingly the derivative from each of these roots, while retaining a common form, i.e., dāna, reflects a widely different range of meaning. A few examples by way of illustration may be noted.

1. √ *Dāñ-dāne*:[3] The formation here is effected through the third conjugation, the special feature of which is the duplication of the first letter and the shortening of the long vowel in the root word (e.g. √*dā* turns into *dadāti*). Though it is difficult to say whether the grammarian intended it to be so, but the act of duplication may suggest excess or surplus and it is significant that all word-formations in this particular conjugation stand for an object or act which is or is done in excess, e.g. *jihrati* (excessive shyness), *dadhāti* (wearing excessive or ostentatious clothing). Dāna in this sense would, therefore, presuppose an abundance of material resources. That dāna was meant to be made out of only surplus wealth is effectively borne out by the *Dharmasūtras* which categorically uphold that dāna must be made in such a way as not to cause detriment to one's family.[4] The same idea is later reiterated by Manu.[5]

2. *Do avakhaṇdane*:[6] The formation of the word dāna through this rule brings out a shade of its meaning which would commonly not be perceptible at all. The term *avakhaṇḍana* here is used in the sense of

[1]Winternitz, op. cit., I, p. 44.
[2]*Dhātupātha*, no. 1091, *dān—dāne*, p. 37.
[3]M. Sripathi Shastri, *Dhātu Sāgar Taraṇi, A Dictionary of Sanskrit Roots*, Madras.
[4]*Ap. Dh. Sut.*, II. 4.9, 10-12; *Baudh. Dh. Sut.*, II. 3-19.
[5]*Manu*, IV. 32; X. 9-10.
[6]*Dhatupātha*, no. 1148, p. 33.

splitting, cutting, dividing and all the words formed through this rule clearly reflect this meaning. In this sense dāna derived through this root would necessarily carry the sense of division or distribution. Such a meaning attributed to dāna may suggest that its functional viability in a distinctly pastoral order had not quite ceased even in the post-Vedic period.

3. √*Daipa śodhane*:[1] However, it is the formation through this root which invests dāna with a totally new aspect. *Śodhana* literally means to purify or cleanse and may seek to emphasise the new expiatory function of dāna. By *Dharmasūtra* period dāna had clearly come to be regarded as an important means for sin atonement.[2] But the word *śodhana* is also sometimes used in the sense of retaliation and as such may recall the implication suggested by the word *tuṁjhati* of the *Nighanṭu*.

4. √*Daipa ārjave:* The formation through this root would seem to add a new dimension to the act of dāna. The word *ārjave* is generally used in the sense of propriety of act or observance. Hence for the first time Pāṇini seems to emphasise the ritual aspect of dāna. That dāna by *c.* fifth cent. B.C. was understood more in a ritualistic context is apparent from the contemporary *Sūtra* literature as well as the two Epics.

A secondary meaning of *ārjave* is also to be straight or honest and sincere. The formation of dāna through this rule is easily explained if we consider the fact that from *Dharmasūtra* period onwards a devout frame of mind (*śraddhā*) at the time of making dāna was considered absolutely essential for its fruition.[3]

The heterodox religious movement in the sixth cent. B.C. produced a large number of renouncers and wandering mendicants who lived exclusively on alms. Such alms (*bhikṣhā*) are described as dāna in the early Pāli and later Sanskrit heterodox texts. Pāli literature is replete with terms such as *dānapati* (munificent giver of alms), *dānavato bhikkhu*, *dānagga* (a house where alms or donations are given), *dānādhikāra* (supervision or charge of alms distribution) *dānavatthu* (object for a gift); *dānaraho* (worthy for a gift); *dānuppatti* (rebirth of an alms-giver according to his wish). Dāna is even classified as *dhammadānam* (gift of spritual blessings) and *āmisadānaṃ* (gift of temporal blessings).

[1]*Dhātupātha*, no. 924, p. 25.
[2]*Manu*, IV. 226.
[3]S.N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, I, p, 370.

Dāna in the heterodox context would thus seem to comprehend the elements of compassion and charity. It was understood more in the sense of alms or charity rather than ritual gift. It was no new development for even in one of the Ṛgvedic hymns, the word dāna already occurs in the sense of alms to the poor.[1]

Significantly in the Buddhist Pāli canon we come across the concept of *dānapārmitā* which is variously explained as *bahur bhāṇda pariccāgo* (sacrifice of external goods and property) *anga pariccago* (sacrifice of limbs) and even *jīvita pariccago* (sacrifice of life).[2] It clearly emphasises the element of sacrifice entailed in dāna.

Even *Dakkhina*[3] in the Pāli texts bears a totally different aspect from its Sanskrit counterpart (dakṣiṇā). It is used in the *Petavatthu* in the sense of donation given to a 'holy' person with reference to unhappy beings in the *Peta* existence, intended to induce the alleviation of their suffering. Similarly *dakṣiṇā-araha* is a worthy recipient of a dedicatory gift in Pāli.[4]

By the time of Jaimini (500-200 B.C.)[5] dāna began to be imbued with a legal format. Since dāna involved the voluntary transference of property from the donor to the donee, the definition of dāna offered by *Jaimini in his Mīmāṁsā Sūtra*[6] *is svasvatva nivrtipūravakam parasvatvapādānaṃ*, i.e. gift is the transfer of one's ownership in favour of another.

Characteristically Kauṭilya also besides referring to dāna as one of the diplomatic measures for winning over the people of a newly occupied area,[7] has gone into the legal aspect of dāna, especially concerning its revocation[8] and non-conveyance of gifts.[9] Kautilya moreover uses certain terms[10] in the sense of giving of gift such as *tyāga*[11] which may give us some idea about the wider ramification of

[1] *RV.* X 117.
[2] sv, R.C. Childers, *A Dictionary of the Pāli Language*, New Delhi, 1979.
[3] sv, *Dakṣiṇā*, Rhys Davids and W. Stede, *Pāli-English Dictionary*.
[4] *PV*, 11.8.
[5] S.N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, I, p. 370.
[6] *Jaim. Sūt.*, IV, 2. 28.
[7] *AS*, XIII, 5.4.
[8] Ibid. III, 15.19.
[9] Ibid. III, 1. 7; II, 20. 20.
[10] Other terms which occur are *aupagrāhika* (present showing goodwill, II, 23.8), *panyāgāra*, goods given as gifts, VII. 15. 20, *Patrachaya*, a gift to a worthy person, X. 3.30.
[11] *AS*, I. 3. 9; 13. 17.

dāna. The use of the word *tyāga* is significant especially if we view it against the fast developing institution of private property. Gifts made out of private holdings naturally entailed some amount of sacrifice on the part of the donor as compared to gift distribution of tribal wealth. The use of the terms *brahmadeya*[1] (a gift of land to brāhmaṇas) and *brahmadeyika*[2] (brāhmaṇa recipient of gift-land), by Kauṭilya would attest not only that the practice of making land grants to brāhmaṇas was becoming established but also that the religious aspect of dāna was becoming more marked.

By the beginning of the Christian era dāna very definitely came to signify ritual giftmaking to religious beneficiaries. According to the *Dharmaśāstras* dāna to be fruitful must be made only to worthy recipients at proper time and place and in a devotional frame of mind.[3] Great emphasis now began to be laid on the correct ritual performance, e.g. dāna had to be accompanied by dakṣiṇā.[4] These new considerations pertaining to dāna would suggest a change in its very spirit. Formerly it had been made chiefly to celebrate an heroic event or personality without any moral considerations.

Significantly distinctions now also came to be drawn between *iṣṭa* and *pūrta* category of dāna. Literally *iṣṭa* is what is sacrificed and *pūrta* is what is filled or completed.[5] Spiritual merit thus acquired through donative offerings at the time of sacrifice was known as *iṣṭa*, and that resulting from gifts made outside the sacrificial altar (*vedi*) was termed *pūrta*.[6] The distinction which emerged between sacrificial offerings and other gifts at this time is duly emphasised by later *Nibandha* writers. Aparārka on the authority of the *Mahābhārata* includes in the category of *pūrta*, dedications of wells, tanks, temples, gardens, distribution of food and also gifts made on the occasion of eclipse.[7] Hemādri quoting Sāṁkha, considers even nursing of those who are ill as a *pūrta*.[8] The recognition of charitable works such as dedication of wells and tanks in the category of dāna is a remarkable

[1] *AS*, II, 1. 7; II, 20. 20.
[2] Ibid, III, 10. 9.
[3] *Manu*, X, 1-4.
[4] *Vidyā-dāna*, gift of knowledge was therefore regarded as dāna only in a figurative sense.
[5] *Manu*, IV, 227.
[6] *Ibid*, IV, 226.
[7] cf., K.V.R. Aiyangar, *KK. DK.*, intro., p. 66.
[8] cf., P.V. Kane, *Hist. Dh. S.*, vol. II, p. 844.

development which clearly emphasises the widening concept of dāna at this early period.

By the period of the composition of *Amarakośa* (*c.* sixth. cent A.D.[1]) dāna had acquired most of the features which made it into an unique institution. Following the example of the author of the *Nighaṇṭu*, Amarasiṃha also seeks to delineate both the apparent and the latent aspect of dāna by furnishing as many as nine variant meanings. For example *nirvapanam*[2] which literally means to sprinkle or pour out, underlines the ritualistic aspect of dāna. Amarasiṃha too, like Kauṭilya, considers *tyāga* an important basis of dāna.

The other terms such as *utsarjanaṃ* (abandoning), *visarjanaṃ* (cessation), *vitarṇam* (transference) and *pratipādanaṃ* (causing to attain) would seem to highlight the legal implications of dāna viz., the cessation and transference of the donor's property-right over the gift object and the institution of that of the recipients over it.[3] It is to be noted that by this time dāna was not considered complete without *pratigraha* or formal acceptance of the gift-object by the recipient. *Pratigraha* became the chief determining factor which distinguished dāna from the two other forms of religious offerings viz., *yāga* and *homa*.[4] The difference between the latter and dāna is thus put forth by K.V.R. Aiyangar. "While *yāga*, *homa* and *dāna* have a common element in offering, involving relinquishment of ownership, only in dāna is the thing actually taken away by the recipient. In *Yāga* and *homa* this is wanting in a literal sense though it is presumed that what is offered to a deity or the fire is accepted and taken over."[5]

It is, however, the use of the synonyms *sparśanam* and *apavarjanam* by Amarasiṃha which reflect his deep understanding of the nature and purpose of dāna. Gifts according to sociologists represent an intimate psychical union between the giver and the receiver. They serve as one of the best means of social communion. *Sparśanam* metaphorically would seem to emphasise this very idea. Similarly *apavar-*

[1] A.B. Keith, *HSL*, p. 413.

[2] *Amarakośa*, II, 7. 29.

[3] D.F. Mulla, *Principles of Hindu Law*, p. 527, Gift consists in the relinquishment (without consideration) of one's own right (in property) and the creation of the right of another; and the creation of another man's is completed on that others acceptance of the gift, but not otherwise.

[4] e.g., Introduction to the *Mīmāṃsā Sūtras of Jaimini*, chap. IV, p. 78, *SBH*, vol. XXVIII.

[5] K.V.R. Aiyangar, *KK. DK.*, intro., p. 79.

janam which literally means discharging a debt or obligation perhaps gives the best insight into the nature of dāna as it had evolved by the age of the *Purāṇas*. It had by now lost much of its voluntary character and had become obligatory.[1] It was now deemed a sacred duty encumbent on all householders. Manu unequivocally ordains:[2] "Let him (householder) without tiring always offer sacrifices and perform works of charity with faith."[3] The concept of *ṛṇa* or debt[4] now became central to dāna. Dāna was considered the chief means of paying off debt which a man owed to his ancestors (*pitṛ*), gods (*devas*) and sages (*ṛṣi*). The non-performance of dāna especially on sacramental occasions was viewed as a grave sin for which severe expiatory rites were prescribed.

While undertaking a semantic study of dāna it is interesting to note that the Latin terms *da* or *dano* which seem phonetically similar to Sanskrit word dāna, also mean like the latter "to give as a present, to grant, bestow, to sacrifice, to give up, to remit a debt or obligation."[5] The near identity of their meanings would perhaps suggest the Indo-European origins of the two terms. It also emphasises the antiquity and complex nature of the said institution.

The difficulty in finding an appropriate English equivalent, which may be comprehensive enough to convey the multiple shades of meanings of the term dāna is sufficiently apparent and is well acknowledged by J. Gonda, "To these common and well-known words, which I am not mistaken, are not completely equivalent to the English, German or other terms by which they are usually translated, belongs also the root √*dā*. I need not mention here the obvious fact that the many connotations and shade of meaning of *dadāti* are not always translatable by verbs of giving in other languages and vice-versa".[6] Nevertheless the English terms which have been generally though inadequately used for dāna in the present work may be noted viz., (i) gift (ii) charity[7] (iii) donation, (iv) grant (v) alms (vi) benefice and (vii) prestation.[8]

[1] *Infra*, Motives and causes, chapter 2.

[2] *Manu*, IV, 32, 227-28.

[3] Ibid, 226.

[4] *Tai. Saṃ.*, VI, 3. 10. 5; *Śat. Br.*, I, 7. 2. 11; *Ait. Br.*, 33.1; *Mbh.*, Ādi Parva, 120. 17-20; cf., P.V. Kane, *Hist. Dh. S.*, vol. II, pp. 270, 560, 621, 1302.

[5] Cassell's *New Latin Dictionary*, pp. 116-202.

[6] J. Gonda, 'Gifts and Giving' *SS*, p. 122.

[7] Michael, Dāna from the root √dā giving, granting gift corresponds in some ways to the Dictionary meaning of charity, p. 66.

[8] sv., *Chambers' Twentieth Century Dictionary*.

Dakṣiṇā[1]: A similar difficulty is faced in the interpretation of the term *dakṣiṇā*, a word so closely akin to dāna as to make it difficult very often to draw a clear-cut line of distinction between the two. The composers of the Ṛgvedic hymns are specially known to have made a rather indiscriminate use of the two terms. However, as recognised by R. Thapar, *dakṣiṇā* has a more specific connotation although its meaning remains a little ambiguous.[2]

Etymologically the term is derived from the etymon *dakṣaya* which means to impart power or strength. Hence whatever gifts are made to invigorate and strengthen both the religious rites as well as the sacrifices is called *dakṣiṇā*, *dakṣa kāriṇi hi dakṣiṇā* and '*dakṣaśca balam*.[3] By extension, therefore, it came to mean either a gift or a donation made to a priest or a sacrificial fee.[4] But *dakṣiṇā* may also be derived from the word *dakṣiṇā* which means the right or south of. Dakṣiṇā in this sense may be interpreted as the gift made by the giving (right) hand.[5], although E.J. Rapson explains it as referring originally to a cow placed on the right hand of the inger for his reward.[6]

Whether a part of the sacrificial ritual: The meaning of sacrificial fee may be attributed to *dakṣiṇā* because of another of its accepted shades of meaning namely 'prolific' a word which aptly describes the cow. K.V.R. Aiyangar[7] and Louis Renou[8] both accept the interpretation of dakṣiṇā based on this meaning. According to the authors of the *Vedic Index*[9] also, *dakṣiṇā* is the "gift presented to priests at the sacrifice, apparently because a cow, a prolific (*dakṣiṇā*) one was the usual fee on such an occasion."[10] The use of the name *dakṣiṇā* for the

[1]The term dakṣiṇā in the dictionary is variously interpreted as; (i) on the right or south of; (ii) a present or gift to brāhmaṇas at the completion of a religious rite, such as sacrifice; (iii) a gift, offering or donation; (iv) fee, remuneration; (v) fame; (vi) completion of any rite; (vii) prolific, a good milch cow; (viii) daugther of Prajāpati and as the wife of sacrifice personified. sv., *dakṣiṇā* Apte, *Sanskrit English Dictionary*.

[2]R. Thapar, *AISH*, p. 106.

[3]*Sat. Br.*, II, 2.2.

[4]R. Thaper, *AISH*, p. 106.

[5]sv, Rhys Davids and W. Stede, *Pāli-English Dictionary*.

[6]E.J. Rapson, *Cambridge History of India*, I, p. 99.

[7]K.V.R. Aiyangar, *KK*, *DK*, intro., p. 62.

[8]Louis Renou, *Vedic India*, p. 100.

[9]sv, dakṣiṇā, Macdonell and Keith, *VI*, vol. I.

[10]*Kāt Sr. Sūt*, XV. 2. 13. (The rule that when no article is specified, the cow is meant indicates that the old fee was a cow).

daughter of Prajāpati and the wife of sacrifice personified would further associate the term with sacrificial rite. Since the term also carries the meaning of completion of any rite, it may safely be inferred that *dakṣiṇā* is the gift (mostly in the form of cow) made on the completion of a sacrificial rite to the officiating priest in order to strengthen the sacrifice.

But the fact of *dakṣiṇā* being an indispensable part of the sacrificial rite need not be overemphasised. Since a couple of centuries before the beginning of the Christian era *dakṣiṇā* had already ceased to bear this aspect. It had instead come to form as much a part of the sacrificial ritual as of all dāna making. Dāna now was considered to be complete and fruitful only if accompanied by dakṣiṇā.

Payment for priestly services: Whether *dakṣiṇā* given to the officiating priest on the conclusion of a sacrifice or alongwith dāna was the payment for his services or not is difficult to tell. Heesterman argues that dakṣiṇā was never a salary or a sacrificial fee, but has to be seen as part of the economic system of Vedic times, that of gift exchange.[1] Max Weber also holds that "the brāhmaṇa accepted only gifts (*dakṣiṇā*) not pay. The giving of gifts for the use of their services was of course a ritualistic duty. Sacrifice without gifts brought evil enchantment."[2] The view that *dakṣiṇā* was not exclusive payment for priestly service may find support from the fact that it later began to be given even along with dāna. In fact, the ritualistic significance of *dakṣiṇā* which bordered almost on the magical is far too emphasised in literature to be easily overlooked.[3] As J. Gonda points out *dakṣiṇā* was not given solely in order to pay for services but also to maintain a profitable alliance and to establish a bond between the giver and the receiver by which the former gets a hold on the latter.[4]

Dakṣiṇā, despite its appearing more in the light of a religious gift made out of ritualistic duty, must be treated at least partly as priestly fee for the following chief reasons: (i) It was given only after the religious ceremony had concluded;[5] (ii) The recipient was always the

[1]Heesterman, 'Reflections on the Significance of the Dakṣiṇā, *Indo-Iranian Journal* no. 3, pp. 241-55. His chief contention is that dakṣiṇā was given to both the *ṛtvij* (officiating priests) and to other brāhmaṇas of the *prasarpaka* category whose role was essentially that of observers.

[2]Max Weber, *The Religion of India*, p. 60.

[3]*Ait. Br.* VI, 30.9. See also Jaimini's *Mimamsā, Sūtram*, X. 222, A gift to *ṛtvik* (priests) is with a view to religious fruit. *SBH*, XXVIII, 633.

[4]J. Gonda, 'Gifts and Giving,' p. 140.

[5]*Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, III. 4. 3.

officiating priest, never the non-officiant; (iii) Its payment was obligatory, the sacrificer having no power to withhold it;[1] (iv) The amount to be paid was also largely predetermined,[2] if not through actual bargaining (which was discouraged and hence may be assumed to have been in vogue)[3] then by convention in the shape of past precedents; (v) Even when it accompanied dāna it may have been more by way of remuneration for the priest who helped with the elaborate ritual involved in the act of giftmaking during the later period. Thus even though its aspect of a religious gift is too marked and cannot be overlooked still in view of the available evidence it would be difficult to agree fully with Heesterman's contention that dakṣiṇā was never a salary or a sacrificial fee.

An important fact which emerges from the above discussion is the elasticity evident in the meanings of the terms dāna and dakṣiṇā, which naturally permits us greater scope for a more liberal exposition of the two institutions, especially during the early period when they were shaping out to meet the needs of a materially none too developed society.

[1] J. Basu, *IB*, p. 117.

[2] *Asva Gr. Sūt.*, I. 23. 21. "He (who is chosen as a *ṛtvij*) should ask: what sacrifice is it? who are the priests officiating? What is the fee for the sacrifice?" *Mimāṃsā Sūtram*, *SBH*, XXVIII, p. 633.

[3] *Āpas. Dh. Sūt*, II.5.10.8 "He shall not choose (for the performance of a *Śrauta*-sacrifice) a priest who is unlearned in the *Veda* nor one who haggles (about his fee)."

CHAPTER 2

Motives and Causes

The existence of any social institution over a long period of time suggests its sustained functional value for society. Giftmaking being an important mode of establishing social relationship with other individuals or groups, it becomes necessary to consider in terms of time and place, the immediate motives as well as the general, social and cultural needs which impelled the donors to make gifts.

Some motive is bound to be present in all acts of giftmaking. It may very often be of an emotive or even psychic nature, rooted in superstition or firm customary habit or some other irrational thought process. There can be no way of either verifying it or substantiating it by any definite external proof. Even the donor cannot be expected to be fully aware of these subconscious motives. Difficulty faced in discerning the motives of all actions in general and that of giftmaking in particular is thus acknowledged by F.G. Bailey, "In this field, as in many others, we cannot talk of motivations, for there is no means of knowing what are the 'real' springs of human action."[1]

Nevertheless, considering the fact that man cannot exist in a social vacuum, and that all his actions are bound to be governed both by the quality of inter-relationships that he hopes to build up and the multiple social institutions which surround him; the predominant giftmaking motives in a certain period can be determined through various methods. For example, we may examine probable motives expressly mentioned in the contemporary texts. They can also be inferred from the gain or result the gifts were expected to produce or from the kind of occasions on which these gifts were generally made.

I. Motives Expressly Stated in the Sources

In the contemporary literature we come across several passages

[1] F.G. Bailey, 'Gifts and Poison', *The Politics of Reputation*, p. 22.

enlisting giftmaking motives which are generally known to prompt the donor to make gifts.

In the *Anguttara Nikāya* are mentioned eight motives for giftmaking viz., "One gives alms out of impulse; one gives out of exasperation; one gives under a misapprehension; one gives from fear; one gives thinking: "That was previously given and done by my ancestors. I am not the man to let the ancient family tradition fall into disuse;" or, "when I have given this gift I shall, on the breaking up of the body after death, be reborn in the blissful heaven-world;" or, "From this gift of mine, my heart finds peace; joy and gladness are gotten;" or, he gives to enrich and mellow his heart."[1] Similar motives are reiterated in the *Dīgha Nikāya*.[2]

Similarly, in the *Mahābhārata* discoursing on the subject of giftmaking Bhiṣma tells Yudhiṣṭhira, "Indeed, I shall tell you, O Bhārata, how gifts should be made unto all the orders of men. From desire of merit, from desire of profits, from fear, from free-choice, and from pity gifts are made, O Bhārata! Gifts, therefore, should be known to be of five kinds".[3] Analysing the motives, Bhīṣma further observes: "With mind freed from malice one should make gifts unto brāhmaṇas, for by making gifts unto them one acquires fame here and great felicity hereafter; (Such gifts are regarded as made from desire of merit). 'He is in the habit of making gifts or he has already made gifts to me', hearing such words from the solicitors one gives away all kinds of wealth unto a particular solicitor (Such gifts are regarded as made from desire of profit). 'I am not his, nor he mine. If disregarded he may injure me', from such motives of fear even a man of learning and wisdom may make gifts unto an ignorant wretch (Such gifts are regarded as made from fear). 'This one is dear to me, I am also dear to him', influenced by considerations like these a person of intelligence freely and with alacrity makes gifts unto a friend (Such gifts are regarded as made from free choice). 'The person that solicits me is poor; he is again gratified with a little', from considerations such as these, one should always make gifts unto the poor, moved by pity. (Gifts made from such considerations are regarded as made from pity)."[4]

In the *Milindapañho*, Nāgasena while recounting the motives which

[1] *Aṅg. Nik.*, VIII, 4.33.
[2] *Dīg. Nik.*, XXXIII; Saṅgiti Suttanta, III, 2. 258; *Aṅg. Nik.*, VIII, 4.31.
[3] *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva 138, trans. vol. XI, p. 288.
[4] Ibid, p. 288.

did or did not impel King Vessantara to undertake the extreme act of gifting all his wealth, his kingdom, even wife and children, thus expounds: "The king did not make such a gift for the sake of continued becoming, he did not give for the sake of wealth, he did not give for the sake of a gift given in return, he did not give for the sake of diplomacy, he did not give for the sake of outward appearance, he did not give for the sake of happiness, he did not give for the sake of power, he did not give for the sake of fame, he did not give for the sake (of obtaining daughter) but it was for the sake of omniscient knowledge."[1] Āryasūra, writing a little later than the period under study, states the reason as to why the rich are prompted to undertake giftmaking: "If the wealthy practice charity they are commonly impelled to do so by the hopes they put in the cultivation of that virtue; good conduct too may be accounted for by the wish to obtain high regard among men or the desire of reaching heaven after death."[2]

Motives for giftmaking are also found to be clearly specified in some of the Buddhist and Jaina votive inscriptions. Numerous Jaina image inscriptions from Mathura state that the images were installed "at the request of the preacher (*vāchaka*)[3] whereas others are said to have been put up "for the worship of the *Arahaṁtas*."[4] That installation of votive images or dedication of *caityas* and temples was also undertaken to promote one's own welfare as well as that of one's near kinsmen would be evident from inscriptions forthcoming from Mathurā, Bodhgayā, Kanheri and Kuda. While one of the Buddhist image inscriptions informs that an image of Bhagwat Śākyamuni was installed by a female lay-worshipper "for the welfare of herself, her parents, her *bhattārikā*, the mother of Jīwaka and all creatures;[5] the Bodhgayā Buddhist coping stone inscription specifically mentions that the temple was erected by the donor, "for the welfare of his relations and his teachers (*upādhyāya*) living at Ahavagra."[6] Similarly the Kanheri Buddhist Cave inscription was meant "to promote the merit of the donor's mother, Nomidinikā."[7]

[1] *Milinda*. IV. 8. 10, tr. I.B. Horner, *SBB*, vol. XXII, p. 163.
[2] *JM*, BK. X. 35. tr. Speyer, p. 103.
[3] Mathurā Jaina image Ins., *Lüd.*, nos. 22, 24, 25, 27, 28, & 30.
[4] Ibid, nos. 41, 102, 105, 107.
[5] Bombay University Library Buddhist Image Ins. of the time of Huviṣka, *Lüd.*, no. 43.
[6] Bodhgaya Buddhist Coping Ins., ibid, no. 952.
[7] Kanheri Buddhist Cave Ins., ibid, no. 1018.

"A Buddhist cave inscription from Kudā, records the gifts of the Śākya monk "for the merit of his parents and the bhāṭaka."[1]

Gifts of caves or images are occasionally also stated to have been inspired by more selfless motives e.g. one of the Kanheri Buddhist cave inscriptions records the gift of a teacher (*acārya*) Buddharakṣita with the wish that "all living beings may become Buddhas."[2]

II. Motives Inferred on the Basis of Results Which Gifts were Expected to Produce

Our sources reveal that gifts made to religious beneficiaries and the poor were expected to yield certain positive gains for the donor. The *Cullavagga* refers to the 'wishing-gift' (*abhisaṃkhārikam*) which is defined by Rhys Davids and Oldenberg as 'a gift by the giving of which the donor expressly wished that a particular result should be brought about by the normal effect of that good act in a future birth."[3]

Sin-expiation: Contemporary literature is full of references vouching for the widespread belief in the efficacy of gifts for atonement of sins. While Vaśiṣṭha stipulates that through gift of sesamum grains "the guilt which he (i.e. donor) has incurred during his (whole) life will instantly vanish"[4] Gautama explicitly affirms, "gold, cow, dress, horse, land, clarified butter and food are the gifts which destroy sin."[5] Similarly in the *Mahābhārata* it is stated that "by giving villages and thousands of cows, one is freed from all sins, as the moon is from masses of darkness.[6] At another place in the same text it is stated that if "after comitting numerous sins, a person makes gifts of earth unto members of the regenerate class he casts off all those sins just as a snake casts off its slough."[7] The concept finds a clear echo in Manu's assertion: "A worthy recipient will (perhaps) he found who saves him from all guilt."[8]

Desire for temporal gain and spiritual merit: Besides sin-expiation the other conspicuous gain contemplated through giftmaking by

[1]Kuda Bud Cave Ins., *Lüd.*, no. 1046.
[2]Kanheri Bud. Cave Ins, ibid, no. 992.
[3]*CV.* IV. 4. 5, *SBE*, vol. XX, p. 9. fn. 3.
[4]*Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, XXVIII, 18-19.
[5]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, XIX, 17.
[6]*Mbh.*, Āraṇyaka Parva, 34. 76.
[7]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 61. 66.
[8]*Manu*, IV, 288.

brahmanical and heterodox thinkers alike, was in the shape of spiritual and temporal rewards. The concept finds beautiful exposition in one of the later *Smṛti* texts, "A person wishing that the things he covets in this life or things that are extremely endearing to him in his house may be eternal shall make gifts of those articles to a qualified brāhmaṇa."[1] The earlier *Gṛhya* and *Dharma Sūtra* texts, specify various articles the gift of which could secure definite ends for the donor. According to Gobhila the gift of hundred pegs of *Khadira* wood ensures long life.[2] Vaśiṣṭha recommends the gift of an umbrella for obtaining a house and the gift of a pair of shoes for begetting a vehicle.[3] The *Dīgha Nikāya* openly avows: "That which he gives he hopes to receive in his turn."[4] Our sources even furnish instances of a particular gift bringing forth marvellous gains for the donors. Thus in the *Milindapañho*, we come across the story of slave Punnaka who on giving a meal to Sāriputta, attained to the dignity of a treasurer (*seṭṭhi*).[5]

Superstitious fear an important motive for ritual giftmaking: Motives for giftmaking can be discerned also from the kind of occasions on which ritual gifts are mostly known to be made or are prescribed by the lawgivers. As noted above the more popular occasions for giftmaking were generally those which marked some important social happening or event in the life of an individual, such as childbirth,[6] tonsure (*cūḍākaraṇa*)[7] initiation,[8] marriage,[9] coronation,[10] inheritance[11] embarking on fresh business ventures,[12] adoption of ascetic mode of life[13] and death.[14] These giftmaking occasions would suggest

[1]*Vis. Smṛ.*, XCII, 32.
[2]*Gobh. Gr. Sūt.*, XII, II
[3]*Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, XXIX., 7-19.
[4]*Dig. Nik;*, III, 2. 259.
[5]*Milinda*, IV. 8. 25.
[6]*Rāmā*; Bāla, 18.20; *Dh. Pada*, BK. 26, Story 32; *Aṣṭarūpa Jāt*, vol. I, no. 100, p. 242
[7]*Pāras. Gr. Sūt.*, II.1.28; *Hiraṇya. Gṛ. Sūt.*, I.23.6.
[8]*Āpas. Gr. Sūt.* VI. 16.4.
[9]*Mahāukkusa Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 486, p. 183; *Dh. Pada*, BK. 16, Story. 9.
[10]*Rāmā*, Yuddha, Chap. 130, trans. p. 369.
[11]*Therāgāthā*, III. CLXXI; *Dh. Pada*, BK. 16, Story. 9.
[12]*Vinaya*, (Nissaggiya, XXVIII. I; *Jarudapāna Jāt.*, vol. II, no. 256, p. 205.
[13]*Dh. pada*, BK. 14, Story 6, Spent all his wealth by way of alms in the course of a week and retired from the world, becoming a monk of an heretical order.
[14]*Kassapamandiya Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 312, p.24; *Mbh.*, Āśramavasika Parva, 20.6; *Rāmā*, Ayodhyā, chap. 77, p. 328.

that although expression of happiness, affection, appreciation, gratitude or even cultivation of self-discipline through renunciation of material possessions were some prominent reasons for giftmaking, yet fear of the supernatural was an equally strong motive for making gifts.[1] Gifts made on occasions such as eclipse would seem to be specially inspired by the desire to dispel its evil effect. In the *Gobhila Gṛhya Sutra* it is laid down that "on the occasion of a lucky event (such as the birth of a son) or of a meritorious work (such as the dedication of a pond or of a garden) a person should give food to an even number of brāhmaṇas."[2]

Fear and concern for personal safety seem to be the chief motives for giftmaking undertaken by merchants and all those engaged in risky ventures. We learn from the *Mahāvaṇija Jātaka* how some traders, "when going away on business, came with gifts to the Master."[3] The *Vimānavatthu* refers to traders who, as they set out on a journey to Sindhu Sauvira, to profit by their trade made as was proper, great gifts.[4]

Self-interest—The Most Dominant Motive: An analysis of these contemporary textual references to giftmaking motives reveals an interesting fact. The underlying motive for giftmaking was mostly the desire for personal welfare and gain. This is sufficiently apparent from such imputed motives as the desire for merit and fame both here and hereafter, or the expressed hope that an excellent report will spread; or the fear that 'if disregarded he may injure me.' Some gifts are stated to be made out of certain other selfish considerations too. For instance to keep up 'outward appearance,' to gain power, happiness and some times even for the sake of 'a gift given in return' or pure diplomacy.[5]

But on a closer scrutiny, even those acts of giftmaking, which are seemingly inspired by more selfless motives, such as the desire for the

[1]To this day there is prevalent amongst the Hindus the popular custom of *nyochāvara*, according to which a person more vulnerable or susceptible to the evil eye (on account of some lucky event in his life) is sought to be protected through the mystical act of touching or encircling his head with a piece of coin which is later given away generally to a person of very low social order who due to adversity would not deign to refuse it.

[2]*Gobh. Gṛ Sūt.*, IV. 3.35.

[3]*Mahāvanija Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 493.

[4]*VV*, Serisaka's Mansion, VI. 9. 83.

[5]*Milinda*, IV.8.10, tr. I.B. Horner, *SBB*, XXII, p. 163.

welfare of not only relations and friends but of all beings would be found to reflect donor's own sense of insecurity, perhaps born out of the evanescent quality of life in general and overpowering social and economic circumstances in particular. It becomes difficult therefore to determine how far the pity felt by the donor for the infirm and the poor springs from his selfless regard for the latter's welfare, and is not really a projection of his innate apprehension and concern for his own personal well-being.

Evidence of ritual gifts serving as the most effective means of sin-expiation not only suggests the widespread contemporary belief in the concept of sin and the need for its expiation, but it also underlines the equally frequent transgression of rigid social and ethical norms, which characterise a patriarchal society run on the basis of a strict disciplinary code. Significantly amongst the donor categories, there is a preponderance of those who belong to the affluent ruling[1] and mercantile classes. This naturally suggests that it was perhaps a sense of guilt produced by the exploitative nature of their economic pursuits as well as the increasingly impersonal and unscrupulous manner of their social dealings which induced them to make dāna. A similar motive may also be discerned in the case of gifts made by members of such professional groups as that of courtesans,[2] usurers, druggists (*gandhīka*) who were still not looked upon with approval by the traditional moralists of the time.

The principle that "what is given away in this life is acquired in the next,"[3] besides being based on a widely-held belief in the reproductive quality of all gifts, would be found to have two other major metaphysical concepts central to it, viz., the doctrine of *karma* and the theory of rebirth. In the *Mahābhārata*, a worm attributes its present miserable state to having not undertaken dāna in its former life.[4] Both these ideologies would appear highly significant. Although they had their genesis in the later Vedic period, belief in them gained momentum only in the subsequent period when they not only became fundamental to the concept of giftmaking, but even penetrated the heterodox thought-currents of the time. Remarkably even the Buddhist

[1]*Mbh.*, Āraṇyaka Parva, 34. 75. Whatever sin is committed by a king while enjoying the earth is wiped out afterwards by sacrifice in which huge amounts are paid as fee.

[2]*Dīg. Nik.*, Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta, II. 98; *VV.* Sirimā's Mansion, I. 16.

[3]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 61. 32.

[4]Ibid, 118.21.

philosophy, which otherwise vehemently rejected the doctrine of metempsychosis, could not avoid subscribing to the theories of both rebirth and *karma* which find exhaustive treatment in the *Petavatthu*. Such a development underlines not only the increasing absorption of an individual in his own self and his deep anxiety for personal well-being both in this world and in the next, but also his dwindling involvement and identity with the welfare of the tribe and community. Widespread practice of giftmaking for the sake of gaining better station in next life would therefore bespeak growing individualism, which was fast superceding collective identity.

Concern for personal well-being would be reflected also in the gifts made in order "to become free from every disease"[1] or to "ward off the evil consequences foreshadowed by ominous dreams[2]." According to Hemādri[3] gifts which have an immediate effect in life are of two kinds: those which increase enjoyment (*bhogada*) and those which destroy illness (*rogāhāra*).

Dāna less self-regarding in the Vedic Age: Giftmaking motives during the Vedic age may be inferred from the major category of donors and the chief occasions on which those gifts were made. The *Ṛgveda* as well as the rest of the literature presents one dominant class of donors, namely tribal chieftains who made munificent gifts on the occasions of big *soma* sacrifices, performed either to celebrate some great military success or to ensure such a victory in future. Since wars during the major part of the Vedic age involved the effort of the entire tribe, the tribal chiefs and the heads of small kingdoms through dāna even though may have desired success and prestige for themselves, but as representatives of the kingdom or the tribe, their personal aspirations must have naturally become identified with those of the whole tribe. Giftmaking during the period preceding that under study, therefore would not appear to reflect an overwhelming egotistical concern for oneself.

III. Self-Motivated Dāna: Characteristic of a Growing Spirit of Individualism

Considerations of self-interest becoming more marked in the making

[1]*Mbh.*, Anuśasana Parva, 57. 38
[2]Ibid, 85, tr. XI, p. 140.
[3]K.V.R. Aiyangar, *KK. DK.*

of ritual dāna would necessarily reflect a spirit of growing individualism.[1] In the post-Vedic context such a phenomenon was the outcome of certain major socio-economic developments with regard to (i) extension of private property; (ii) growth of urban and commercial ethos marked by strong competitive spirit; and (iii) class fragmentation and the break-up of the tribal order.

(i) *Extension of private property and individual ownership:* As discussed elsewhere[2] our analysis of popular gift-items reveals strong linkage of giftmaking with individual's right to property, for gift of only those articles are known to be more popular during a particular period which also came to constitute items of private property. Accordingly, the growing popularity of different gift-items at different points of time would provide the best index to the growth of the institution of private property. Although some articles such as gold, cattle and cloth continued to be valued as items of gift throughout the period under study, yet the preponderance of some commodities over other gift-items at a particular stage of social and material development is clearly discernible.[3]

Gifts of certain articles such as food, clothing, vehicles, horses, cattle, slaves, gold are known to be extensively made right from the beginning of the sixth century B.C. or even earlier. Such gifts would naturally indicate that these items not only constituted important items of wealth at this time but also over which individual ownership had come to be fully recognised. The fact that land, except in the form of villages, did not figure very extensively as an item of gift or sale[4] right upto the beginning of the Mauryan period is significant. Though it does not disprove the establishment of private ownership over land for purposes of residence and cultivation,[5] yet it does suggest that land still did not constitute an item of property over which an individual could normally exercise full arbitrary rights of disposal. On the contrary, right to ownership of landed property seems to be still vested in the extended family, controlled by the patriarch. But

[1]It has been observed that philanthropy finds special place and stress in a society wherein liberty of the individual is predominant, cf., G.S.P. Misra, 'A Study of Philanthropy in Early Buddhist Ethics,' *Indica*, XVIII, no. 2, p. 73.
[2]Infra, Gifts vis-a-vis evolution of padtriarchal family and property right, p. 52
[3]Ibid.
[4]N.N. Kher, 'Land Sale in Ancient India', *JOIB*, XII.
[5]Lallanji Gopal, 'Ownership of agricultural land in Ancient India', *JBRS*, XLVI.

by the post-Mauryan period, recognition and extension of individual's right over landed property is well affirmed by the more frequent notices of gift of land. The development was largely responsible for the marked increase in the concern which began to be now displayed for the protection and promotion of individual interests in property.

(ii) *Urban and commercial ethos marked by strong competitive spirit:* With the increase in surplus production as a result of improved iron-technology, not only multiple artisanal crafts showed up and growth of new urban centres and commercial enterprise became more marked, but newer avenues for individual earnings were also opened up. This economic trend became specially marked during the post-Mauryan period when extensive trade links with Rome and China were established. The rise of a numerous class of rich merchants, artisans, state functionaries, even that of courtesans and physicians would attest to the greater vocational initiative and enterprise which had now begun to be shown by the individual. Not only individual holdings multiplied but personal interests now topped over all other considerations.

(iii) *Class fragmentation: break-up of the tribal order:* Growth of private property, in fact, proved to be a cataclysmic development. It not only rung the knell for the Vedic tribal order, but also heralded a new spirit of individualism. It inculcated in the people egotistical values pertaining to property ownership, which seem to have directly clashed with the collectivist ideology of the former age. From common welfare of the community man's concern henceforth shifted to his own personal well-being, which now engaged his supreme attention. These developments gave rise to a feeling of social alienation and economic insecurity. Desire for material wealth and personal well-being bred in the individual not only a stronger sense of disaffection and insecurity but by bringing his interests into clash with those of others also made him suffer from a greater sense of alienation and guilt. Precedence given to egotistical considerations over those of other's welfare, was now treated as a moral default, for which expiation (*prāyaścitta*) in the form of dāna was very often prescribed.

(iv) *Need for sympathy and compassion:* Man's growing feeling of insecurity and despair would, however, seem to have also intensified his need to beget other's sympathy and compassion, which was perhaps projected through the altruistic attitude which he himself had now adopted towards others. Charity to the poor and the needy as well as hospitality now became highly applauded ethical virtues, while

dāna to religious beneficiaries was extensively recommended.

Emphasis on compassion was already so marked by the later Vedic age, that even Vedic polytheism could not escape being affected by it. Thus we find that Viṣṇu, who had held only a secondary position in the Ṛgvedic pantheon, now in his newly conceived aspect of protector and preserver of the universal order, gradually emerged as one of the chief gods, a transcendent and immanent being who was the very embodiment of divine grace and compassion for all living beings. In fact, the doctrine of the ten incarnations (*avatāra*) of Viṣṇu which gained great popularity during the centuries immediately preceding and following the Christian era, essentially emphasised the compassionate aspect of this deity, whose help and forgiveness could always be secured through intense devotional worship (*bhakti*).

The constant craving for material possessions and the resultant disaffection moreover led the individual to pin his hopes on a future existence, through the performance of good and selfless deeds in this life. Out of whatever little he possessed, which in any case he could not hope to retain for ever, he gave dāna in order to get back much more in the other-world. The innate desire for immortality may also account for the increasing importance which now came to be attached to the concept of spiritual merit (*iṣṭapūrta* or *puṇya*). The belief grew that spiritual merit could be earned through making gifts to religious beneficiaries. Popularity gained at this time by the cult of ancestor worship in the form of *śrādha* offerings may also be attributed as much to the deepening issue of property inheritance as to man's desire to seek immortality through one's progeny.

But if the growing egotistical concern made an individual believe in rebirth and *karma*, it also filled him with an increasing sense of futility and despair as well as with the desire to renounce wordly possessions and take to a life of asceticism. It is, therefore, not surprising that asceticism became widely popular at this time and was uniformly supported and prescribed by all heterodox leaders. The latter as the Upaniṣadic philosophers had endeavoured before them, were striving to find ways to overcome despair in man's life. Thus according to the Buddha all suffering in this world is caused essentially by egotistical cravings which must be annihilated in order to achieve freedom from unhappiness and pain.

Dāna becoming obligatory for householders

The declining tribal order and the consequent loosening of kinship

ties led the brahmanical and heterodox leaders to try and inculcate in the householders a sense of social awareness. Solicitude for one's fellow-beings became manifest mainly through the practicse of the dual virtues of charity and hospitality. Care of large number of destitute and physically handicapped persons had formerly constituted the concern of tribe as a whole and a direct responsibility of near kinsmen. But with the disintegration of the tribal unit they were now left without any support. Duty of providing for them, therefore, devolved on all householders who, no matter how modest their means, could still afford to spare a little out of their own cooked food. The concept of sharing food, which now began to be emphasised both by heterodox and brahmanical theorists, would seem to be a reiteration of the former tribal practice.

According to Baudhāyana, one should never eat without having given away some small portion of the food, for as the goddess of food is stated to have hereself observed: "He who without giving me to the gods, the manes, his servants, his guests and friends consumes what has been prepared, in his exceeding folly swallows poison."[1] Manu stipulates that "a householder must give (as much food) as he is able to spare to those who do not cook for themselves and to all beings one must distribute (food) without detriment (to one's own interest)."[2] The principal of sharing was not confined to food alone but was to be applied to all items of daily use, as is evident from the *Gobhila Gṛhya Sūtra:* "Of a garment he should offer some threads (with that formula)".[3] Gifts to monks and ascetics may have been prompted also by the conviction on the part of the householder that his own kith and kin who had taken to recluse's way of life would be likewise taken care of by other householders. That *bhikkhus* often sought and received alms at their parents' house would be evident from the references contained in the *Theragāthā*.[4]

Concept of ṛṇa or moral obligation: In fact, by the age of the *Dharmasūtras* dāna to the brāhmaṇas, the poor and, in fact, to all sentient beings had become encumbent on all householders. According to Baudhāyana, a householder should "gently place on the ground (some food) for dogs, outcastes, (*caṇḍālas ṣvapāk*), those afflicted with diseases, crows etc".[5] Such a pervasive notion of alms-giving deve-

[1]*Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, II. 3.5, 17, 18.
[2]*Manu*, IV. 32.
[3]*Gobh. Gr. Sūt.*, IV. 8. 9. 22.
[4]*Theragāthā*, I. XXIII, p. 27; XV. CCLI, p. 302.
[5]*Budh. Dh. Sūt.*, III. 92.

loped by the brahmanical lawgivers drew its strength mainly from the widely current belief in the theory of the fourfold debt (*ṛṇa*) which a householder owed to the gods (*devas*), sages (*ṛṣis*), manes (*pitṛ*) and all living creatures (*bhūta*). The only way through which such a debt could be discharged was by making appropriate offerings to them either directly or through their spiritual representatives, the brāhmaṇas and the *śramaṇas*. Offerings to gods (*vaiśvadevas*)[1] had to be made at a rite called *devayajña*,[2] and to the sages at *brahmayajña*.[3] To the manes *tarpaṇa* or *śrāddha* was to be offered at *pitṛyajña*[4] and to all living beings offerings of cooked food (*bali-harana*) were to be made at *bhūtayajña*.[5]

Alms making was now enjoined upon and practised by the householders at all hours of the day. Thus according to Āpastamba, "when the householder gives food in the morning, at noon, and in the evening, (these gifts) are the *savannas* (of that sacrifice offered to Prajāpati)".[6] That making alms before partaking of meals was a common practice observed as much by Buddhist lay followers is evident from the reference contained in the *Vimānavatthu* to a young girl who gave alms.[7] Similarly according to the *Therigāthā*, Uttamā "gave gifts before and after dining."[8] The *Dhammapada* alludes to the "multitudes going before breakfast to give alms."[9] Householders are also known to make alms regularly to a set of *bhikkhus*[10] or brāhmaṇas. The *Vinaya* thus refers to the venerable Upananda who was dependent as a regular diner on a certain family at Rājagaha: "When solid food or soft food came to that family a portion of that was set aside for him."[11] The *Milindapañho* alludes to a woman lay-follower who had supported the venerable Assagutta for thirty years.[12] In the age of the

[1]*Aśva. Gr. Sūt.*, I. 2. 1; *Vaś. Dh. Sūt.*, XI. 3.
[2]*Aśva. Gr. Sūt.*, III, 1.3.
[3]Ibid.
[4]Ibid, I. 2. 11.
[5]*Āpas. Dh. Sūt.* II. 4. 9. 5-6.
[6]Ibid, II. 3.7.6.
[7]*VV*, Splendid Mansion, III. 1. 29.
[8]*Therigāthā*, XXX. Uttamā.
[9]*Dh. Pada*, BK. 26, Story 33.
[10]Ibid, BK. 17, Story 5; BK. 26, Story 1, Brāhmaṇa thereafter gave food regularly to 16 monks at his house.
[11]*Vinaya*, (Nissaggiya), VIII, 1; also *Vinaya* (Pacittiya) XXIX. 1.
[12]*Milinda*, I. 30; also I. 21.

Buddha it was, in fact, quite common for the laity to institute perpetual meals for a fixed number of *bhikkhus*. According to the *Cullavagga* a certain householder possessed of good food used to give perpetual alms to the *Samgha*."[1]

Dāna mandatory at the time of saṃskāras: Feeding of brāhmaṇas, receiving their benediction and giving of dakṣiṇā[2] became compulsory for the performance of *saṃskāras* as per the *Dharmaśāstra*[3] injunctions. That making of gifts to brāhmaṇas on such occasions was a common practice is well borne out by Pāli sources also.[4] Thus according to the *Pañcavudha Jātaka:* "On the day when he was to be named the parents enquired as to their child's destiny from 800 brahmins to whom they gave their hearts' desire in all pleasure of sense."[5] According to the *Mahāukkusa Jātaka*: "On the seventh day with great ceremony the Daśabala was invited by the newly-married pair, great gifts were bestowed on the Budhha and his company to the number of 500."[6] From the *Kassapamaṇḍiya Jātaka* we learn how after due performance of his mother's funeral rite, a householder at the end of six weeks gave away in alms all the money that was in the house.[7]

Consequently the householders now shouldered the main burden of supporting a large class of social drop-outs who either out of circumstantial compulsion or self-choice had opted for an economically unproductive mode of life.[8] Vaśiṣtha thus clearly stipulates: "As all creatures exist through the protection afforded by their mothers, even so all mendicants subsist through the protection afforded by householders."[9] Our sources are replete with references to the practice of charity and hospitality by householders in the observance of their everyday duty. According to the *Vimānavatthu*," people gave alms according to their

[1] *CV*, IV. 14.6; also *VV*, Slave Woman's Mansion, I. 18, *VV*, Poor keeper's Mansion, V. 55.

[2] P.V. Kane. *Hist. Dh. Sūt*, III, pt. I, p. 261.

[3] *Pāras. Gr. Sūt.*, I.10.5.; 1.8.14-18; *Aśva-Gṛ. Sūt.*, IV. 7. 17. *Sankh. Gr. Sūt.*, III. 11.16; IV 16.5 *Āpas. Gṛ. Sūt.*, VI. 16.4.

[4] *Udāna*, II, Mucalinda, VIII. 17; *Asatrūpa Jāt.*, vol. I, no. 100, *Mahāukkusa Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 486; *Kassapamaṇḍiya Jāt*, vol. III, no. 312.

[5] *Pancavudha Jāt.*, I, no. 55, p. 137.

[6] *Mahaukkusa Jāt.*, IV, no. 486, p. 183.

[7] *Kassapamaṇḍiya Jāt.*, III, no. 312, p. 24.

[8] *Udāna*, II. Mucalinda, VIII. 17; *Asatrūpa Jāt*; I no. 100; *Mahāukkusa Jāt*, IV, no. 486; *Kassapamaṇḍīya Jāt*; III, no. 312; *Pancavudha Jāt*, I, no. 55.

[9] *Vaś. Dh. Sūt.*, VII. 11. 16.

means to *samaṇas* and brāhmaṇas, to beggars, tramps and wayfarers; they provided drinking water in their courtyard, they spread seats in the gateways."[1] From the *Sutta Nipāta* we learn how "on a brahmin no man closed his doors."[2] Similarly the *Jātaka* stories reveal how householders never allowed wayfarers, beggars, brāhmaṇas and recluses to return dissatisfied from their doorsteps.[3] What may partly account for this practice was the belief met with in the law-book of *Vaśiṣṭha*, "If a brāhmaṇa who has come for shelter to the house of a householder receives no food, on departure he will take with him all the spiritual merit of that churlish host."[4] Another popular belief put forth in the *Mahābhārata*, upholds, "They that lead the domestic mode of life are rescued from all sins by a study of the *Vedas* as also by gifts of other kinds, as declared by the wise."[5] Thus by the opening centuries of the Christian era dāna very clearly bore an obligatory character. It was no longer practised only by the rich but had become a form of life for the people in general.

To what extent self-regarding motives distinguish dana from the western concept of charity

It was perhaps owing to the underlying strain of egotism evident in all giftmaking which led lawgivers to regard those gifts as more commendable which evinced the least self-interestedness on the part of the donor. Thus according to the *Mahābhārata* "even a very small gift, made in proper time with a very pure mind is known to be of infinite fruit in the other world."[6] Dāna is classified in the *Bhagavadgītā* into three successively commendable categories viz. *tamasa*, *rajasa* and *sāttvika*.[7] Thus as compared to the *rajasa* category of gifts, which are made either with an expectation of the donee doing a good turn in return or with a view to securing some reward therefrom, the *Sāttvika dāna* is that when a gift is made because one feels it is one's duty to make it and at a proper time and place and to a worthy person who will not return it. Similarly in the

[1] *VV.*, I. I.

[2] *Sut. Nip*, II. 7.5.

[3] *Pītha Jāt.*, III, no. 337, p. 79.

[4] *Vaś. Dh. Sūt.*, VII. 6.

[5] *Mbh*. Anuśāsana Parva. 104. 21.

[6] *Ibid*, Āraṇyaka Parva, 245. 33.

[7] *Bh. Gītā.*, 17. 20-21.

Buddhist texts *Anguttara Nikāya*[1] and *Itivutthaka*[2] two types of gifts are distinguished, namely the carnal and the spiritual and "of these two gifts the spiritual is pre-eminent."

Gombrich, while expounding the Buddhist concept of giftmaking, has tried to classify it into two categories on the basis of motives, "that with thought of worship (*pūjābuddhīya*) which is motivated by respect, and that with thought of favour which is motivated by pity."[3] The two, according to him, are actions from religious and societal points of view respectively. The former is exemplified by a gift to the *Saṃgha*, the latter by a gift to a beggar. Going by Gombrich's analysis, dāna to religious beneficiaries may be regarded as springing more from respect and regard for one's religious order, rather than pity or any material considerations. In the light of our foregoing discussion about the inherent self-regarding nature of all gifts whether made to religious beneficiaries or to alms seeking beggars, Gombrich's contention can be accepted only with due reservations, for even gift to the *Saṃgha* would be found to be inspired as much by the desire to earn spiritual merit or even fame for oneself as by respect for one's religious order.

But the view that holds the Hindu concept of dāna to be distinct from the Western concept of charity on the ground that the latter is inspired chiefly by pity and compassion and the former more by motive of self-interest and religious duty, would be found to be equally fatuous. The view is thus put forth in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, "Alms giving (dāna) among the Hindus is primarily a religious obligation, and differs in some respects, both in conception and in practice from that which passes under the same name in the West. Of alms giving as the bestowal of gifts upon the poor and the needy prompted by a feeling of sympathetic compassion, Hinduism knows nothing."[4] Such a clear-cut demarcation of motives between those relating to dāna and those relating to the Western concept of charity is neither feasible nor relevant. It would be highly presumptious to maintain that the element of self-interestedness is wholly lacking in the Western concept of charity, for as seen above even compassion when properly analysed would be found to reflect,

[1] *Ang. Nik.*, XIII. I. 10.
[2] *Itivutthaka*, III. V. IX.
[3] Richard F. Gombrich, *Precept and Practice*, p. 247.
[4] James Hastings, *ERE*, III, pp. 387.

if not personal insecurity than at least a certain amount of egotistical vanity. Even Western sociologists concede: "The debate between egoism and altruism, between private interests and public interests is, in fact, not a part of the study of motivation but rather a part of the language of claims. You are one upon your rivals if you can convince other people that you have acted in the interests of the community, while he was selfish."[1]

Thus our data makes it amply clear that growth of private property bred a spirit of individualism which profoundly affected all major religious and social formations of the time. It more especially made giftmaking into a widely popular practice motivated as it had become by multiple self-interests. Whereas desire for fame and prestige proved to be dominant motives in the pre-market prestige economy of the Vedic period, atonement for sin, acquisition of spiritual merit as well as pity and compassion would be found to contribute stronger inducements for undertaking dāna in the class-divided, commerce oriented material-milieu of the post-Vedic times. But in a society such as that we confront during the post-Mauryan period, which was steadily acquiring a traditional base and a growing parochial outlook (deliberately fostered by self-seeking sacerdotal class), superstitious fear and force of social traditions would seem to be other equally strong motives for giftmaking.

[1] F.G. Bailey, op. cit., p. 22.

CHAPTER 3

Kings, Merchants, Artisans and Other Donors

Our sources reveal the widest possible range as far as the economic and social status of the donor is concerned. The *caṇḍālas* standing at the lowest rung of the social ladder are as much heard of making gifts as the brāhmaṇas at the top. We learn from Manu how Viśvāmitra when tormented by hunger, received food from the hands of a *caṇḍāla*.[1] Dealing therefore with donors as a class, we are really confronted with an exceptionally large group of people who often seem to have very little besides the act of giftmaking in common.

Although generalisations are not always easy to make, a study of the contemporary data, which is replete with stylised expressions and repetitive platitudes, enables us to discover a certain pattern in the giftmaking behaviour of different categories of donors. Rich *seṭṭhis* and *gahapatis* for instance are known to uniformly build six alms-halls at different city points.[2] We have, therefore, classified donors into certain broad categories with a view to seek the rationale behind their respective giftmaking behaviour and also to assess their economic competence as donors.

It may be noted that numerous donative epigraphs belonging to the period under study mention merely the name and occasionally the place of residence of the donor. Nothing else about the donor's identity especially concerning his social status is revealed.[3] The only significant exception is the Junnar Buddhist cave inscription in which the castes of the donors is specified.[4] In many cases, besides religious leaning and implied affluence, no other information may be gleaned from the inscriptions about the donor. It is therefore difficult to assign

[1]*Manu*, X. 108.

[2]*Khadiranga Jāt.*, I, no. 40; *Visayha Jāt.*, III, no. 340; *Shankha Jāt.*, IV, no. 442

[3]*Bhilsa Topes*, ed. Cunningham, no. 128, 130, 157.

[4]*Lūd*, no. 1151. Gift of a *upathāna* by Mala the Mudhakiya 'of the Mūrdhaka caste,' and Ananda the Golkiya 'of the Golika caste'.

them to any particular donor group. In some donative records even the name of donor is omitted and we cannot say whether the donor was an individual person or some corporate body.[1]

Royal Donors

The tribal tradition of gift distribution by the tribal chief which underwent inevitable changes in the transition period of the later *Vedas*,[2] seems to have gradually permeated into the monarchical fabric of the post-Vedic period. With the break-up of the tribal order the king emerged more as the head of the territorial state than as the chief of his tribe.[3] Consequently, while he was apparently freed from the duty of the distribution of spoils amongst fellow-tribesmen, the tribal ideal which upheld him as the distributor of gifts clung to his mantle. Thus giftmaking undertaken by rulers on the occasion of Vedic sacrifices such as *Rājasūya* or *Aśvamedha* in which all sections of the population were feasted and showered with lavish gifts[4] appears to be a vestige of the old Vedic custom of gift distribution by the tribal chief.[5] A tribal practice which had long since lost its economic relevance and political validity to have continued to live on under the most altered political and social conditions would seem a strange phenomenon. Several factors would seem to account for it.

I. Apparently the rulers of territorial states in the post-Vedic period had not only ceased to directly provide for their fellow-tribesmen, but had even begun to subject them to unprecedented forms of coersion such as tax-exactions, Manu while forbidding the acceptance of gift from non-kṣatriya kings compares the latter with a butcher who maintains ten thousand slaughter houses.[6] It was perhaps the king's stricken conscience which vented itself in such occasional outbursts, "My wealth exists for only my subjects residing in the city and the country, and not for my own comforts and enjoyment. The King,

[1]*Lūd.*, no. 1162-67.

[2]R.S. Sharma, 'The Later Vedic Phase', *HS*; 'Class Formation', *IHR*, II, 1975, no. 1

[3]Romila Thapar, 'First Millennium B.C.', *DPR*, p. 116

[4]*Mbh.*, Sabhā Parva, 32-18.

[5]*Rāmā*, Bāla, XXXV. Then the assisting priests placed all the king's gifts before the holy sages, Vaśiṣṭha and Riṣyaśringa and begged them to distribute them....... Each one received his just share and the priests were highly pleased and well satisfied.

[6]*Manu*, IV. 86.

O virtuous one, who gives away for his own pleasure the wealth that belongeth to others can never earn virtue or fame."[1] According to the *Mahābhārata*, "The king should be content with the name he wins and the umbrella that is held over his head. He should divide the wealth of the kingdom among those that serve him. Alone he should not appropriate everything.[2] A strong sense of guilt from which the kings probably suffered at this time may have been therefore at the back of at least some royal giftmaking.

II. But more than any guilt conscience, these royal gifts would seem to be inspired by the kingly ambition to assert superior wealth and power. They would appear to reflect more the spirit of prestige economy especially manifest in monarchical states[3] than anything else. As such these gifts[4] often took the form of magnificent bounty lasting for days and months together.[5] Even the Buddhist pilgrim Fa-hien, who visited India a little later than the period under study, took due notice of the competitive spirit evident in such acts of royal munificence. He observes, "The kings of near countries vie with one another in their offerings to it."[6] Similarly according to a passage of the *Jātakamālā* (a work belonging to the fourth century A.D.), "The voices of the beggars spread about the perfume of the fame of his munificence and so abated the pride of the other Kings."[7] That personal rivalry could be a strong incentive is borne out by frequent references to gifts being made out of sheer emulation or the wish to not lag behind in a competitive display of munificence. The spirit of competition manifested through giftmaking is well revealed in a story of the *Dhammapada*, which relates how the king and the citizens vied with each other in making magnificent gifts.[8]

III. Nevertheless the increasing number of royal grants of tax-free land and village revenue to religious beneficiaries from the Mauryan period onwards must have meant loss of considerable revenue to

[1] *Mbh.*, Udyoga Parva, 116. 13-14.

[2] Ibid, 38. 24.

[3] R. Thapar, 'First Millennium B.C.' *DPR*, p. 119-20.

[4] Hathigumpha Cave Ins. (of Khāravela), *SI*, I. BK. 11. no. 91; J. Przyluski, *The Legend of Emperor Aśoka in Indian and Chinese Texts*, tr. Dilip Kumar Biswas, p. 122.

[5] *VV*. First chair mansion 1. 1. tr. p. 1 (King Pasenadi inaugurated the seven days unparalleled almsgiving for the order)., *Dh. Pada*, BK. 17, story. 3.

[6] *Travels*, tr. Giles, p. 9.

[7] *JM*, II. 6, tr. Speyer, p. 10.

[8] *Dh. Pada*, BK. 13, Story 10.

the state. How was this loss being compensated? It certainly could not have been purely in terms of a salved conscience or spiritual merit earned by the royal donors, even though desire for personal fame and glory might prove strong incentives. It is suggested that the recompense sought by these rulers in lieu of land and wealth was chiefly in the shape of validation of their newly won political power. This would be sufficiently evident from the stipulations made by Kauṭilya with regard to acquisition of new territorial possessions, "After acquisition of new territory he (king) should cover the enemy's faults with his own virtues. He should carry out what is agreeable and beneficial to the subjects by doing his own duty as laid down, granting favours, giving exemptions, making gifts and showing favours."[1] Kauṭilya's advice is also reiterated by Manu.[2] The idea finds an echo in the *Mahābhārata*, wherein it is stated, "Having obtained a kingdom, a king should win all, some by gifts, others by force and yet others by sweet speech."[3] It is further said in the same text that the commands of a king who makes gifts of earth "can never be disobeyed anywhere".[4]

IV. Gifts to religious beneficiaries by royal donors of aboriginal or of Central Asian origin would seem to have been chiefly aimed at securing for them a formal recognition and ritual status in society. As Max Weber rightly points out, "Rich gifts of cattle, money, jewellery and above all land were compensations for brāhmaṇas who provided the necessary proofs of genteel's descent for the Hinduised ruling stratum of an area undergoing assimilation."[5] In fact, the wide popularity wielded by the institution of dāna at a time when there was also a heavy influx of foreign powers as well as unprecedented extension of cultural frontiers in tribal periphery areas cannot be treated as a mere coincidence.

Source of Royal-Munificence and its Effect on State-Economy

The identification of king with the state, however, could never be complete. Hence even while the king framed state policy concerning public welfare[6] he continued to make other charitable and religious

[1] *AŚ.*, XIII. 5. 4; XIII. 5. 11.

[2] *Manu*, VII. 200.

[3] *Mbh.*, Śānti Parva, 76. 31.

[4] *Ibid*, Anuśāsana Parva, 61. 87.

[5] Max Weber, *The Religions of India*, p. 16.

[6] N.N. Kher, 'Public Expenditure in Ancient India,' *JIH*, 1964, p. 818.

grants out of his own privy purse.[1] Since the concept of the state could never fully develop in ancient India, the line of demarcation between state exchequer and the king's privy purse always remained too thin.

Prevailing confusion in this regard is apparent from the very conflicting evidence forthcoming from the contemporary records. Thus while in the *Dhammapada* a king emphatically maintains, "I never took what belonged to you, but with the assistance of son and wife, gave only what belonged to me. Wherein have I done you wrong?"[2] in the *Samyutta Nikāya* another king thus dictates, "Of the revenue coming in from the outlying provinces one half shall be sent into the palace and one half shall there and then be given as gifts to those who ask—brahmins, recluses, paupers and cripples, wayfarers and beggars."[3] The *Mahābhārata* denounces a king who having amassed wealth makes it over (for safe keeping) to his treasury officers and guards, and then commences again to plunder his kingdom, saying unto his officer, "Do you bring me as much wealth as you can extort from the kingdom."[4] The king who spends the wealth that is thus collected at his command under circumstances of fear and cruelty, in the performance of sacrifices, is also strongly denounced.[5]

In fact, excessive royal munificence, sometimes at the cost of state interests, is suggested by our sources. Thus we hear of rulers spending as much as fourteen crores of treasure by way of religious gifts in a single day.[6] That such an enormous amount had for its source just the king's personal wealth would be presuming too much. Prior to the foundation of the Mauryan imperial structure, the rulers appear to have enjoyed almost a free hand in apportioning state revenue for charitable and religious grants. The deduction is supported by the evidence of kings who gave free vent to their charitable disposition and thus brought on themselves not only the resentment of the counsellors and the people but also the insubordination of their tributaries. For example, king Suvarcha performed so many virtuous deeds that his treasure and vehicles became greatly reduced. When his treasury became depleted the feudatory princes swarming round him began to

[1] *Dh. Pada.*, BK. 13, Story 10.
[2] Ibid, p. 27.
[3] *Sam. Nik.*, II. 3. 3.
[4] *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 60, trans. XI. p. 66.
[5] Ibid.
[6] *Dh. Pada.*, BK. 13, Story 10.

give him trouble.[1] In the *Dhammapada*, a minister thus expresses his concern over his royal master's philanthropic excesses, "How the king's fortune has diminished. In one single day fourteen crores of treasure have been spent. And these monks, after feasting upon these alms will go away, lie down and sleep. How the king's fortune has been wasted."[2] The *Mahāvastu* records the tale of another king whose treasuries failed due to his large scale giftmaking. Ultimately, "the treasurer, chief ministers, princes, counsellors and the mass of the people came together and he was banished from his kingdom."[3] A similar altruistic excess on the part of Vessantara was likewise resented by his subjects. The latter are said to have banished him from the kingdom.[4]

Amongst the more historical kings, Bimbisāra[5] Prasenjit,[6] Ajātaśatru,[7] Udayana,[8] the Nandas,[9] Aśoka,[10] Khāravela,[11] Gautamiputra Śātakarṇi, receive encomium for their very large charitable and religious benefactions. Still it was only Aśoka amongst these ruler who is known to have faced serious opposition from his mininters for over-indulging his munificent propensity. According to legends preserved in late Buddhist texts *Bahiranidāna*[12] *Divyāvadāna*[13] *Aśokavadāna*[14] *Si-yu-ki*,[15] Aśoka towards the end of his reign was prevented by his council of ministers from making gifts. The account cannot be dismissed as mere Buddhist prevarication.[16] In the Girnar Rock edict Aśoka himself alludes to ministerial opposition against his policy of

[1] *Mbh.*, Aswamedha Parva, 4. 12 '*tasya dharmapravrtasya vyasiryatkosavahanam tam kṣīṇa koṣam samantati sāmantātparyapidayan.*
[2] *Dh. Pada*, BK, 13, Story 10.
[3] *Mahāvastu*, tr. J. J. Jones, p. 40.
[4] *Vessantara Jāt.*, VI, no. 547.
[5] *Dh. Pada*, I, BK. 1, Story 8, p. 208.
[6] Ibid, The Story of the Biscuit Doll. BK. 1. 4; *Udāna*, Mucalindra, II. VI. 14.
[7] *PV*, The Story of Cula Setthi, BK. 11. 8. 9.
[8] *Maj. Nik*, XCIV, Ghotamukhasutta, II. 163; *CV*, XI. I. 14.
[9] J. C. Jain, *Life in Ancient India as Depicted in Jain Canon*, pp. 141-42.
[10] *Divyāvadāna*, p. 300.
[11] Hathigumpha Cave Ins., *SI*, I, BK. II. no. 91, p. 206.
[12] *Bahiranidāna of Buddhaghosa*, Third Great Convocation 52, tr. Jayawickrama, pp. 46-47.
[13] Vide B.M. Barua, *Aśoka and His Inscriptions*, p. 172.
[14] Jean Przyluski, *The Legend of Emperor Aśoka*, tr. Dilip Kumar Biswas, p. 70.
[15] T. Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, II, p. 99.
[16] A. L. Basham, *Studies in Indian History and Culture*, p. 39; S. Chattopadhyaya, *Bimbisāra to Aśoka*, p. 151.

making large-scale religious endowments, "If in the council (of *mahāmātras* a dispute arises, or an amendment is moved in connexion with any donation or proclamation which I myself am ordering verbally".[1] Our sources strongly suggest that "in the case of the gift of village Lumbini, bureaucracy prevailed against charity."[2] Perhaps it was not so uncommon for kings to carry bounty to absurd limits. Besides the well-known example of Harṣa of Thaneswar we also come across the modern instance of a ruler of Bengal who used to donate five *bīghas* of land to brāhmaṇas daily; and when there was no more *khas* land, he abdicated.[3]

Hence even while making all possible allowance for natural exaggeration and subsequent legendry accretions, it still becomes necessary to consider the effect of excessive giftmaking upon state economy. Such an exercise becomes all the more essential when we learn from the Chinese trio (*i.e.* Fa-hien, Yuan Chwang and I-tsing) how large landholdings and untold wealth had become accumulated in the monasteries.[4] Even though some of this wealth may have been bestowed by traders and merchants,[5] still considerable amount would seem to have been gifted out of the royal coffer.[6] That the evil of hoarding wealth in monasteries was not such a late development is proved by our sources. Several notices of very large quantities of various gift articles being stored in monasteries, are forthcoming.[7]

Works of Public Welfare: In order to determine the extent to which such royal benefactions proved a drain on state resources, we shall be considering only those cases of giftmaking, in which the donor seems to have erred in favour of excessive bounty. Moreover royal munificence manifested in the form of construction of roads, rest-houses (*sattra*),[8] lakes[9] and canals,[10] would also have to be excluded from such a study, since such works of public welfare had by Mauryan times come to be regarded more or less a part of the normal ministrate

[1]Girnar R.E. VI, *CII*, I, p. 12.
[2]Hultzsch, *CII*, I, p. 165, fn. 3.
[3]J. M. Dattam, 'Distribution of Brāhmans in Bengal' *MI*, XLII, p. 96.
[4]Vide Pushpa Niyogi, 'Organisation of Buddhist Monasteries in Ancient Bengal and Bihar' *JIH*, LI, p. 534.
[5]*Dh. Pada*, BK. 9, Story 4.
[6]Krishan, 'Decline of Buddhism in India' *VIJ*, II, 1964, p. 115.
[7]*MV*, VI. 5. 9. VIII, 9.1, *CV.*, V. 37. 1; *Gaudhara Jāt.*, III, no. 406.
[8]*AS*, II. 35. 5.
[9]'Girnar Rock Ins. of Rudradāman, *EI*, VIII, p. 42.
[10]'Hathigumpha Cave 'Ins. of Khāravela *SI*, BK. II, no. 91, p. 206.

functions of the state.[1] Charitable and welfare works may have been undertaken in the name of the king mainly because a developed concept of state still did not exist. Giftmaking in the form of public endowments therefore could not have in any way undermined the financial stability of a kingdom.

Religious grants of villages and land of a specific category, on the other hand, when made in very large numbers[2] and along with certain additional privileges would affect state revenue to a considerable extent. But gifts of waste or virgin land and even of villages, when unaccompanied by other fiscal and administrative immunities, would not cause any substantial loss to the state. Such landgrants would appear to promote state interests by aiding the process of land reclamation. It was therefore only the gift of agricultural fields and villages exempted from all taxes and accompanied by fiscal immunities, which were most apt to strain state economy[3].

An analysis of our data shows that during the age of the Buddha, while gift of cultivated land was absolutely rare[4] gift of villages also, although extensively undertaken[5] is still never spoken of as carrying any administrative or fiscal immunity.[6] Grant of villages during this early period seem to have essentially entailed the king transferring his right of revenue collection to the beneficiary.[7] But presumably even the resultant loss of village revenue may have been to some extent compensated for, through reclamation of waste or marsh land falling within the village boundary.[8]

Even though the practice of gifting land is suggested by several sources and gift of tax free cultivated land to brāhmaṇas is specially recommended[9], yet notices of gift of land during this early period nowhere indicates that cultivated and not waste land was being

[1]K.V.R. Aiyangar, *Aspects of the Social and Political System of Manusmṛti*, p. 12.
[2]*Mahāumagga Jāt.*, VI, no. 546, p. 182. ref. to gift of sixteen villages.
[3]*Infra,* The place of dāna in economy, chap. 9.
[4]*Infra,* Gifts vis-a-vis evolution of property right, chap. 7.
[5]*Mahāummagga Jāt.* VI, no. 546, pp. 173, 178, 182 ; *Junha Jāt*, IV, no. 456, p. 63.
[6]G.M. Bongard-Levin, Some problems, p. 216; Jaimal Rai, *Rural Urban Economy*, p. 78.
[7]D.N. Jha, *Rev. Sys.*, pp. 127-28; R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism*, p. 2; R.S. Sharma *APII*, p. 137.
[8]Jaimal Rai. *Rural Urban Economy*, p. 88; *Infra*, chap. 6.
[9]*Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, I.43. 44; *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 61.78.

gifted.[1] On the contrary there is a strong suggestion that it was mainly waste land or land for building residential quarters for monks, which was the object of earlier landgrants. As such these early landgrants, instead of entailing any loss of revenue, might have facilitated agricultural expansion.

From post-Mauryan period onwards gift of cultivated land (*kṣetra*) is commonly spoken of in contemporary texts.[2] Gift of arable land by royal donors would have necessarily meant alienation of state income from that much piece of land. It is however to be noted, that no gift of land or village is recorded in any of the pre-Sātavāhana epigraphs. Not only the earliest notice of gift of villages is available from a Sātavāhana inscription from Nānāghāt[3] but subsequent references to gift of villages[4] and land[5] are forthcoming mostly from Western India. A specific mention of tax-exemption occurs for the first time in a Sātavāhana inscription from Karle. The inscription records the gift of a village "with its taxes ordinary and extraordinary, with its income fixed and proportional" to the community of Valuraka.[6] Again it is only in Sātavāhana inscriptions that we get the earliest notices of the grant of administrative and certain fiscal immunities to the beneficiaries. By special injunction of the donor the donated land now could not be entered by royal troops, disturbed by government officials or interfered by the district police.[7]

Amongst the fiscal immunities are mentioned only the transfer of the donor king's control over salt.[8] Some loss of revenue to the

[1]*Infra*, chap. 8, Sec. Effect on Agricultural Production.

[2]Mahad Bud. Cave Ins., *Lüd.* no. 1073; *Milinda*, IV, 8.7; Nasik Cave Ins., *SI*, Bk. II, no. 59, 83, 84.

[3]Nānāghāt Cave Ins. of Nāganikā, *SI*, Bk. II, no. 82, p. 192.

[4]Karle Cave Ins. of the time of Nahpāṇa, ibid, Bk. II, no. 61 p. 171; Nasik Cave Ins. of the time of Nahapāṇa, ibid, Bk. II, no. 54, p. 169, ref. to gift of sixteen villages; Nasik Cave Ins. of Vāśiṣṭhiputra Pulumāvi, ibid, Bk. II, no. 86, p. 203.

[5]Nasik Cave Ins. of Gautamiputra Śātakarṇi, ibid, Bk.II no. 83, p. 199, ref. to gift of field measuring 200 nirvartana, *SI*, Bk II, no. 84, p. 201.

[6]Karle Cave Ins. of Vāśiṣṭhiputra Pulumavi, *SI*, Bk. II, no. 85 p. 205. *grāmaḥ dattaḥ valūraka saṃghāya valūraka layanasya sa karot karah sā deyameyah*; *EI*, VII, p. 161.

[7]Nasik Cave Ins. of Gautamiputra Śātakarṇi, *SI*, Bk. II, no. 83,84, *Aprāveśyam anāvamarśyaṃ alavaṇ akhātakamarāstṇa-sāmvinayikam sarva Jātipārihārikam ca.*

[8]Nasik Cave Ins., *SI*, Bk. II no. 84, p. 201 '*Alavaṇa Khātakam*'.

state as a result of grant of tax-free land[1] therefore, is clearly suggested. But in view of limited fiscal immunities granted and the revokable nature of these grants of arable land,[2] not very extensive loss to the state exchequer can be presumed. Moreover, right up to the end of about AD 200, gifts of agricultural fields are not known to be very extensively made. Even those which were undertaken, were mostly confined to the regions of Western Deccan. In fact, not a single contemporary epigraph recording gift of land is forthcoming from Northern India. The limited practice of making landgrants during the period under study is a significant fact. It rules out the possibility of these landgrants affecting the revenue of a kingdom in any substantial manner. Landgrants made to religious beneficiaries by Sātavāhana rulers, on the contrary, might have promoted state interests by aiding the process of cultural expansion.

Similarly benefactions in the form of construction of monasteries, stupas, caves on an excessively magnificent scale, such as those undertaken by Aśoka or Kaniṣka[3] although could have been made only out of state exchequer but these are found to be made only by those kings who commanded a powerful kingdom which was also rich in economic resources. Vālmiki perhaps has a financially weak and unstable kingdom in mind, when referring to a rulerless land, he observes: "In such a land, there are no assemblies nor do the people visit pleasant parks and gardens, build temples and homes of rest".[4]

At least during the period under study therefore, there is not much ground to believe that excessive giftmaking by rulers in any way proved detrimental to the fortunes of a kingdom. On the contrary it may suggest the existence of a sound state economy.

Royal Kinsmen

King's close relatives stood only next to the king in their bounty. The gradual strengthening of the royal power during the post-Vedic period meant an unbounded increase in material wealth enjoyed by

[1]Karle Cave Ins. of Vāśiṣṭhiputra Pulumāvi, *SI*, Bk. II, no. 85, p. 202, *sakarot karah sa deyameyah.*

[2]Nasik Cave Ins. of Gautamiputra Śātakarni, *SI*, Bk II, no. 84, p. 201.

[3]*Travels*, tr. Giles, p. 13.

[4]*Rāmā*, Ayodhyā Kānda, 67.

the kings and in the accompanying regalia. Vast amounts of wealth became concentrated in the hands of the king's mother, brothers, sisters, queens and children. That members of the royal family possessed means, quite independent of royal control, and were making gifts in their own right is clearly evident from the Queen's Pillar edict. In it Aśoka clearly enjoins the official concerned to register the gifts made by the Second Queen specifically in her name.[1] The queen's wealth however may have also comprised the dowry received from her parents. The *Vessantara Jātaka* refers to some sources of the queen's wealth. Prince Vessantara thus addresses his wife Maddi: "All that I ever gave to thee or goods or grain or gold or treasure, precious stones and plenty more beside, thy father's dower."[2]

Besides numerous records informing us of the bountiful donations made by queens,[3] king's mother,[4] princes,[5] princesses[6] to religious orders, the Nāsik cave inscription of the time of Śaka-kṣaharāta ruler Nahapāṇa (c AD 119-24) records the munificence displayed by the latter's son-in-law Uṣavadāta. The quantum of gifts made by him would seem to easily surpass many a royal bounty.[7] Similarly from the Mathura Lion Capital inscription of the time of Mahākṣatrapa Rajula we learn how his chief queen made gifts "together with her mother Abuhola, her father's mother Pispāsi, her brother Hayuara with his daughter Hana, the harem etc."[8]

The source of such large-scale giftmaking by princes and princesses however, could not have always been confined to their personal wealth alone. That they very often exceeded the limit of personal wealth and impinged upon the state exchequer is sufficiently borne out by the example of prince Vessantara who was banished from the

[1]Queen's P.E., *CII*, I, p. 159.

[2]*Vessantara Jāt.*, VI, no. 547, p. 256.

[3]*Manchapuri Cave Ins.*, of the chief queen of Khāravela, *EI*, XIII, p. 159; *Lüd.*, no. 169, p. 27; *Bharhut Ins.*, *CII*, II, pt. II, p. 15; Mathura Lion Capital, *CII*, II, pp 48-49.

[4]*Nāsik Bud.* Cave Ins., *Lüd.*, no. 1123.

[5]*Lüd.*, no. 868. Bharhut Ins., *CII*, II, pt. II, p. 14; Mahad Bud. Cave Ins., *Lüd.* no. 1072, prince Viṣṇupālita.

[6]Banavasi Stone Ins., *Lüd.* no. 1186, p. 136; Nāsik Bud. Cave Ins. of the time of Nahapāṇa, *Lüd.*, no. 1132, p. 126.

[7]Nāsik Cave Ins., *SI.* vol. Bk. II, no. 59, p. 169.

[8]Mathura Lion Capital Ins. of the time of Mahākṣatrapa Rajula, *CII*, II, pt. I, p. 37.

kingdom by his father's subjects for excessive giftmaking.[1] A queen in the *Godha Jātaka* thus expresses her inability to make gifts: "Dear Sir, I get nothing from the king. How then should I give a present to you?"[2]

State Functionaries

The cadre of ministers and royal officers constituted a much bigger and broader based section of donors than that formed by the immediate circle of king's kinsmen. The former besides including ministers,[3] priests, *senāpatis*,[4] comprised also officers down to the ranks of royal scribes[5] and foreman of artisans.[6] The components of this hierarchic bureaucratic fabric, which is found to be specially large during the Mauryan period, were drawn from almost all sections of society. But a definite preponderance of the brāhmaṇa element with regard to ministerial offices is evident.[7] In Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* there occurs the term *ārya-brāhmaṇa* denoting the king's chief counsellor.[8] Manu and other lawgivers advise a king to appoint a learned brāhmaṇa to hear the suits in his absence.[9] Early Pāli texts also repeatedly mention brāhmaṇa ministers. Thus in the *Mahā-Parinibbāna Suttanta* Sunidha and Vassākara are referred to as the two able brāhmaṇa ministers of king Ajātasatru.[10]

The stipulation made in chapter three of the fifth book of the *Arthaśāstra*[11] with regard to the wage scale of royal officers provide us

[1]*Vessantara Jāt.*, VI, no. 547, p. 256.

[2]*Godha Jāt.*, III, no. 333, p. 72.

[3]Junnar Bud. Cave Ins,, *Lüd.*, no. 1174; Kanheri Bud. Cave Ins., *Lüd* , no. 994.

[4]Guṇḍa Stone Ins., *SI*, Bk. II, no. 69, p. 181.

[5]Pitalkhora Bud. Cave Ins., *Lüd* , no. 1191.

[6]*Lüd.*, no. 346.

[7]R.P. Kangle, *The Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra*, pt. III, p. 145. It may be assumed that the advisers of the rulers must have largely come from this i.e. brāhmaṇa class. Apart from the *purohita* who normally may be supposed to exercise powerful influence on the rulers, most of the *mantrins*, if not all, were also probably drawn from this class. That ambassadors *dūtas* were as a rule brāhmaṇas may be inferred from the *Arthaśāstra* I.16.14-15.

[8]V.S. Agarwala, *India as Known to Pāṇini*, p. 79.

[9]*Manu* 8.1, 8.9; 8.11; *Yāj. Smṛ.*, II. 1-39 *Br. Smṛ.*, 1.65; G.D. De, *Significance and Importance of Jātakas*, p. 183; R.K. Sharma, *Brahmins*, p. 124.

[10]*Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta*, 1. 2, *SBE*, XI, p. 2.

[11]*AŚ*, v. 3.

with an interesting index for that period, concerning the respective competence of the members of the bureaucracy to make gifts. The fact that not very extensive evidence is forthcoming with regard to gifts being made by this class of donors during the Mauryan period and the period antecedent and subsequent to it is significant. It leads us to assume that while in the pre-Mauryan period, when full-fledged development of the bureaucracy had still not taken place, the size of this group of donors was naturally too small to have really mattered, in later times remuneration, still not being in land-holdings but in cash or kind,[1] could not have been substantial enough to render the members of bureaucracy into a very potential class of donors.

Occasionally, however, they are also heard of making gifts as a concerted body. Thus in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* we get the interesting story of a king who when entreated by his nobles, adherents and the army to be allowed to make gifts at the city gates, gave them the second and the third of the four gates.[2]

NOBLES, LANDOWNERS AND MERCHANTS *KHATTIYA S, GAHAPATIS* AND *SETTHIS*

While the categories of donors treated so far constitute adjuncts to the fast evolving monarchic pattern of government there appears on the post-Vedic social scene a new category of donors who epitomise the very spirit characteristic of this age, viz. that of incessant striving after acquisition of material wealth. Wealth in other forms, besides that of land and cattle, turned out to be an important factor in the changing economy of this time, for it became a focal point around which social competence now revolved.[3]

The new set of donors, marked out by their great wealth and figuring chiefly as a consumer class, may be classified into several subgroupings on the basis of the terms by which they are designated in the

[1]R.S. Sharma, *APII*, p. 204. Payment to Sātavāhana officers may have been made in cash, a practice recommended by the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya and supported by the long list of various figures of *kārṣapaṇas* given in the Nānāghāt cave inscription of Nāganikā and elsewhere.... All this however does not preclude payment to officials in kind. Braj Deoprasad Roy, *Political Ideas and Institutions in the Mahābhārata*, p. 224. "The salary of the *rathin* was paid in the form of 1000 coins. This was the amount of salary paid to every *rathin* in the army of Yudhiṣṭhira."

[2]*Saṁ. Nik.*, II. 3.3. tr. Mrs. Rhys Davids, I, p. 83.

[3]Jaimal Rai, *Rural UrbanE conomy* p.343,

records. The two terms we come across very frequently in the early Pāli literature are *gahapati* and *seṭṭhi*. Two other terms much less frequently used are *khattiya* and *kuṭumbikas*.

The literal sense conveyed by these terms is not difficult to discern, although the technical inflexion which they acquired with time, invest them with a certain ambiguity which may be dispelled only by referring them to the contemporary socio-economic conditions. Thus the designation *gahapati*, as the Pāli variant of *gṛhapati* of the Vedic texts, would stand for the head of extended household, wielding complete authority and full control over its numerous members and entire property (which may have chiefly comprised land and cattle at that time). It is very likely, therefore, that by the sixth century BC, with the rapid growth of private property due to the extension of field agriculture, the *gahapatis* (known as *gabhavai* in the Jaina texts) emerged as an extremely wealthy and socially influential class of landed community. That much of their social prestige was derived from their ownership of landed wealth is amply borne out by the *Jātakas*. From the same source we learn how they got this land tilled by slaves and wage-labourers. Thus *Suvaṇṇa Kakkaṭa Jātaka* refers to one such *gahapati*, who one day had gone to his field with his men and gave them orders to plough.[1] But very often these *gahapatis* with all the capital at their command are also known to have evinced interest in commercial enterprises.[2] As held by D.D. Kosambi, the *gahapati* of the *Jātakas* is a man, generally of the vaiṣya *varṇa*, who follows all professions from finance, trade and farming to carpentry, but always for wealth and social prestige.[3]

The term *kuṭumbika*, which means the head of *kuṭumba* or big family, though occurs more rarely in the contemporary texts.[4] also seems to carry more or less the same connotation as *gahapati*,[5] and therefore, need not be treated as a separate socio-economic grouping.

The word *khattiya* occurring only occasionally in Pāli literature is derived from Sanskrit word kṣatriya which itself had come to replace the Vedic term *rājanya* meaning king's kinsmen. Although at one or

[1]*Suvaṇṇa Kakkaṭa Jāt.*, III. no. 389.

[2]*Lüd.*, nos. 1056., 1062, 1073; *ASWI*, V, no. 14, p. 79: *EI*, VIII, no. 6, p. 75; S.C. Bhattacharya, *Some Aspects of Indian Society*, pp. 128-29.

[3]D.D. Kosambi, *An Intro.*, p. 277.

[4]*Lüd.*, no. 1121.

[5]Richard Fick, *Soc. Org.*, p. 256.

two places in the *Jātakas*[1] the term is used in the sense of kṣatriya *varṇa*, yet as suggested by Fick, *khattiya* in the post-Vedic period may have stood for a class of nobility.[2] Social consequence and prestige of its members emanated both from their being related to princely houses as well as chiefs of the clan. Thus we learn from the *Kuṇāla Jātaka* how within the tribal republics of the Śākyas and Koliyas land was held by the nobility whose members enjoyed princely titles of rājā.[3]

Likewise *seṭṭhi*, as a term of designation, is the distorted form of Sanskrit word *śreṣṭhin* which literally means the best or the chief.[4] Although in the *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* the term *śreṣṭhin* occurs in the sense of a leader[5] later it came to be used in the technical sense of foreman of a guild[6] or head of the *śreṇi*. The latter like the *gahapati*, wielded economic influence and social prestige by virtue of his authority over the guild, which was fast turning into a strong and socially influential economic organisation. Fiser, however, contends that the *seṭṭhi* of the *Jātakas* cannot be regarded as the head of a guild. On the contrary, he feels that these *seṭṭhis*, while originally occupied with agriculture, later separated themselves from the majority of the agricultural population and besides farming began to engage in commerce.[7] Whatever the genesis of their wealth and influence, the *seṭṭhis* definitely figure as big business magnates in the Pāli texts controlling large amounts of liquid capital. As such their emergence as an economic grouping may be attributed to the introduction of monetised economy, proliferation of industries and the rise of mercantile centres during the second half of the first millennium BC. Though as commercial entrepreneurs they are found to be functioning primarily in urban centres, yet as Fiser rightly maintains, they were not totally divorced from the agricultural background. Very often *seṭṭhis* are described in the *Jātakas* as possessing land which some of them may have held as absentee landlords.[8] Probably, just as the

[1] *Vessantara Jāt.*, VI, no. 547.
[2] Richard Fick, *Soc. Org.*, p. 253.
[3] *Kunāla Jāt.*, V, no. 536.
[4] sv. *śreṣṭhin*, Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 1102.
[5] *Go. Br.*, 2. 1-23, 2.5.9, vide. *BI*, Calcutta, 1872, p. 100.
[6] sv. *śreṣṭhin*, W. Stede, *Pāli English Dictionary*.
[7] Ivo Fiser, 'The Problem of the Seṭṭhi in the Buddhist *Jātakas*' *AO*, XXII, p. 244.
[8] Jaimal Rai, *Rural Urban Economy*, p. 342.

gahapati deriving social prestige through ownership of landed property, sought to further augment his income by taking to moneylending and other industrial and commercial pursuits[1], the *seṭṭhi* likewise may have invested some of his capital, earned through commercial enterprise, in land for purposes of acquiring greater social prestige and security. Only such an assumption would account for the *seṭṭhi* being occasionally designated also as *gahapati*.[2] Remarkably, these groupings did not always run parallel with or correspond to any particular *varṇa*. Many references show that the *seṭṭhis* even belonged to the brāhmaṇa *varṇa*,[3] which may further confirm the belief that these categories primarily reflect economic groupings with no *varṇa* overtones. Moreover, the gradually diminishing number of references to *gahapati* (except in Buddhist votive records where it seems to be more in the sense of common householders), and the increasingly larger number of allusions to the *seṭṭhis* and rich merchants as well as members of their family in the post-Mauryan period, are significant pointers to the steady rise of the merchant class and the growing involvement of the landed gentry in mercantile pursuits, especially in the form of investments of large capitals in industry and trade via moneylending.

Despite their preoccupation with wealth-making pursuits, the *gahapatis* and *seṭṭhis* are known to have attended to the welfare of not only the needy and destitute members of society, but also to that of the leaders and votaries of various religious orders. The story contained in the *Petavatthu* of a great guild leader Asayha, who gave large donations to recluses, brāhmaṇas, tramps, wayfarers, beggars and mendicants would sufficiently bear this out.[4] In view of many references that are forthcoming to donative offerings made by them, their importance as a class of donors is easily established.

Remarkably this new class of donors, representing the emergent rural and urban affluence, is scarcely ever mentioned as making gifts on the occasion of sacrifices. This fact is significant, for it definitely establishes that sacrifices involving large-scale animal decimation had

[1] Kol Bud. Cave Ins., *Lüd*. no. 1075, ref. to *Seṭṭhin* Saṁgharakhita the son of a *gahapati*.
[2] Mahad Bud. Cave Ins., *Lüd.*, no. 1073, gift made by Vedaśri the son of a *gahapati* and *seṭṭhin* Saṁgharakhita; Kuda Bud. Cave Ins., *Lüd.*, no. 1062, Cave, the gift of the trader *sāthavah* and householder.
[3] *Jayadissa Jāt.* V, no. 513.
[4] *PV.* Bk. II, no. 9, p. 186.

outgrown their original socio-economic relevance. Since cattle was now required to serve the more economically gainful purposes of husbandry and transport rather than as a mere item of food, the gift of cattle by *seṭṭhis* and *gahapatis* is rarely mentioned. Giftmaking by the members of this donor group would be found to be manifested more in the form of large endowments of cash and kind to religious beneficiaries as well as that of small alms of cooked food, items of clothing etc, to secular beggars and needy wayfarers.[1] It is remarkable that apart from kings and the nobility, only a few *negamas* and *seṭṭhis* from amongst the remaining donor groupings are known to have made gifts of land.[2] That land was especially purchased for the purpose of donation can be inferred from the fact that the donated land is occasionally known to be situated in the vicinity of the monastery to which it was donated. Thus the Mahad Buddhist cave inscription refers to the endowment of certain fields (*chheta*) situated below the caves by *seṭṭhin* Saṁgharakhita.[3] Dedications of dwelling quarters to members of the Saṁgha definitely became very popular.[4] Another practice which gained popularity, especially with this section of donors, was building alms-houses at vantage points in the city for regular distribution of alms to the needy and the deserving.[5] The *seṭṭhis* and *gahapatis* are moreover heard of making gifts of parks and wells.[6] They are also known to dedicate railings pillars, gateways and Bodhisattva images to the *saṁgha* Since the source of our information pertaining to the above category of donors, especially for the early period, is singularly confined to Buddhist and Jaina texts and inscriptions, we get no information about gifts made to the adherents of the Brahmanical order.

While the *seṭṭhis* as business magnates dominated trade and commerce by providing the necessary capital, it was the merchants (*vaṇija*), big and small, who were actually plying trade by carrying goods from one place to another, thus being in direct touch with

[1] *PV.* The story of Ankura, II. 9, p. 186, *Bhaddasāla Jāt.*, IV, no. 465.
[2] *Lüd.*, nos. 1073, 1024, 1000.
[3] Ibid, no. 1073.
[4] *CV.* VI. 1.4. ref. to 60 dwelling places.
[5] *Visayha Jāt.*, III, no. 340, *Mayhaka Jāt.*, III, no. 390, *Gangamāla Jāt.*, III. no. 421.
[6] *Kimi Jāt.*, VI, no. 541.

both the producers and the consumers. Some smaller merchants, possessing meagre financial resources, may have been petty manufacturers also[1], selling their goods direct to the consumers.[2] As compared to the earlier period there is evidently an increase in the number of donative offerings made by merchants during the post-Mauryan period. This fact, which is also borne out by various other substantiating pieces of evidence[3] suggests not only a great spurt in both external and internal trade, but also the emergence of the mercantile community as a dominant group of donors.[4] The *Kasava Jātaka* contains a reference to a trader who, while carrying on business, had brought a magnificent yellow robe which he gave as his contribution to the *Saṁgha.*[5]

Except for the abundant wealth and social prestige enjoyed by the *śreṣṭhi*, the latter may easily be bracketed alongwith merchants as a general group of donors as far as the occasions, items and categories of recipients, to whom they extended their patronage, are concerned. Thus there is scarcely any reference during our period to merchants undertaking sacrificial giftmaking. The story given in the *Mahāvastu* of a brāhmaṇa proceeding from Varavali to perform a sacrifice for a trader at Sammudrapaṭṭana may be treated as a rare instance.[6] Although the *Gautama Dharma Sūtra* clearly enjoins that gifts may be received from a person who is a trader but not at the same time an artisan,[7] yet not many instances of gifts made by traders to brāhmaṇas are recorded.[8] Brāhmaṇa donees are not much favoured by the merchants in the few references that we come across. The *Bilārikoṣīya Jātaka* narrates the story of a merchant who used to distribute inferior quality of rice among the brāhmaṇas. He was upbraided by the angry mob when it learnt about it.[9] Although not much favoured by the merchants, brāhmaṇas were still not completely excluded from the general charity undertaken by the former. Thus

[1] Amaravati Bud. Pillar Ins., *Lüd.*, no. 1230. ref. to *gandhīka Vaṁiya.*
[2] Jaimal Rai, *Rural Urba conomy*, p. 345.
[3] Periplus; Ptolemy's *Geography*; Roman coins.
[4] *Visayha Jāt.* III, no. 340, p. 185; *Mayhaka Jāt.*, III, no. 390, p. 187; *Gangamāla Jāt.*, III, no. 421, p. 266.
[5] *Kāsava Jāt.*, II, no. 221.
[6] *Mahāvastu*, II, 89-90.
[7] *Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, XVII. 7.
[8] *Pañchatantra*, tr. Edgerton, p. 148.
[9] *Bilārikoṣiya Jāt.*, IV, no. 450, p. 43.

there is a *Pañcatantra* story of a brāhmaṇa's son who used to receive regular gifts of food in the house of a certain merchant.[1] Even though brāhmaṇas are generally bracketed alongwith the other deserving categories of donees in cases of alms-distribution undertaken by the merchants,[2] nevertheless the mercantile community as depicted in the post-Mauryan records stands out chiefly as the mainstay of the two popular heterodox orders,[3] Buddhism and Jainism.[4] According to our sources merchants were also making religious endowments as a concerted group. The Kanheri inscription of the time of Gautamīputra Śri Śātakarṇi records the construction of a *caitya* by a group of merchants.[5] It was perhaps an extension of this practice which to some extent congealed in the form of giftmaking undertaken by guilds and other corporate bodies at this time.

Peasants and Artisans

Our data reveals the presence of multitudinous artisanal and other professional groupings during the post-Mauryan period. A passage of the *Milindapañho* refers to more than fifty of such occupational groups.[6] Significantly, members of only the following artisanal groups figure prominently as donors in the votive records viz. smith (*karmāra* or *lohavaṇija*)[7] worker in metal (*lohika-kāraka*),[8] weaver (*sautrika*),[9] dyer,[10] goldsmith (*suvarṇakāra*),[11] jeweller (*maṇikāra*),[12] ivory worker (*dantakāra*),[13] carpenter (*vardhaki*),[14] perfumer (*gandhīka*),[15] leather-worker (*carmakāra*),[16] architect (*viśvakarman*),[17] sculptor (*rūpa-*

[1] *Pañcatantra*, Bk. IV, line 10.
[2] M.M. Singh, Dhamma of the Jātakas, *JBRS*, XLIX, 1963, p. 47.
[3] *Śudhabhojana Jāt*. V. no. 535, p. 203.
[4] Bhaskar Chatterjee, 'Religion and Policy in the Kuṣāṇa Age' *JIH*, LIV, 1976.
[5] Kanheri Bud. Cave Ins., *Lūd.*, no. 987.
[6] *Milinda*, V. 4.
[7] *Lūd.*, nos. 29, 1032.
[8] Ibid, 53, 54.
[9] Ibid, 331.
[10] Ibid, no. 32, Wife is called *rayagini*.
[11] Ibid, 986, 95.
[12] Ibid, 1005.
[13] Ibid, 345.
[14] Ibid, 495, 1092.
[15] Ibid, 37, 39.
[16] Ibid, 1273.
[17] Ibid, 173.

kāraka),[1] garlandmaker (*mālākāra*).[2] Members of the other professional groups mentioned as dedicating pillars etc. are fishermen (*dāsaka*),[3] actor (*śailalakas*),[4] dancer (*nartaka*),[5] musician (*vaṇika*),[6] physician (*vaidya-veja*).[7]

Donors being drawn only from limited categories of occupational groups perhaps indicates that members of not all of them could have held equal economic competence. Statistical data based on the above epigraphic evidence moreover reflects a disparity even in the number of donors drawn from each of the occupational groupings to which notices are forthcoming in these votive inscriptions. The *gandhīkas* (perfumers) thus figure in the largest number. Workers in metal, goldsmiths, carpenters and garlandmakers constitute the next important group of donors. Likewise, references to gifts made by peasant-ploughman (*hālakīya*) are relatively scarce. The only allusions are contained in the Sailarwardi Buddhist Cave inscription[8] and the Bhaja Buddhist Cave inscription.[9] Similarly in the *Udāna*, a Buddhist text, we come across a rather rare instance of a cowherd feeding and satisfying the order of monks headed by the Buddha.[10]

Although disparity in the number of notices of donors belonging to these different occupational groupings could be to a certain extent incidental, yet such a statistical analysis does enable us to make certain broad generalisations with regard to their economic status in general and their role as donors in particular.

Peasants and artisans figure as donors more in the post-Mauryan sources than in those belonging to earlier times. This would necessarily reflect the growing economic competence of this class in general. References to peasants and artisans as donors, moreover, would indicate that the competence of a donor depended more on his economic resources than on his social rank. The fact that they were considered vaiśyas and śūdras did not make any difference to their giving capacity provided they possessed the necessary resources. Yet another fact which emerges from the above analysis is the disparity evident between the economic condition of the artisans on the one hand and that of the peasants on the other.

Peasants: The paucity of references to peasant donors would seem

[1] *Lūd.*, nos. 857.
[2] Ibid, 1051, 1061. [3] Ibid, 1129. [4] Ibid, 85.
[5] Ibid, 100. [6] Ibid, 105, 280, 532. [7] Ibid, 984.
[8] Ibid, 1121. [9] Ibid, 1084.
[10] *Udāna*, IV. III. 39, tr. Woodward, Verses of Uplift, p. 46.

all the more significant when on account of agricultural expansion, an increase in the number of peasants and hired field-labour may be presumed. The dearth of references to peasant donors may, therefore, suggest the financial incapacity of poor peasants to make gifts. Tillers of soil in many cases have also figured as proprietors of small landholdings, but in other cases they were either slaves or wage earners or temporary tenants. Thus while Āpastamba[1] suggests that landowners could let their lands to sharecroppers, Pātañjali[2] and Manu[3] refer to servants of the peasant proprietors. Farm labourers are also mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*.[4] As held by G.L. Adhya, there is reason to believe that from the Mauryan period onwards cultivation was mostly done by the people of low social status who were not full owners of the land.[5] Under these circumstances the actual tiller of soil had hardly more than what was sufficient to provide for his bare necessities.[6] This fact combined with the inevitable burden of financial debts and taxes invariably reduced small landowners to a position in which they could hardly be expected to make gifts unless it was their own share which they decided to forego. The *Dhammapada* refers to a certain ascetic who had lodged near a village of farmers. In the evening these farmers used to set aside a portion of the food prepared for their supper and gave it to him on the following day.[7] The story contained in the *Milindapañho* of the poor peasant's daughter who had to sell her own hair in order to provide a mea l for monks also throws light on the economic status of the peasants in general.[8] A reference in the *Mahāvastu* to villages where no alms were forthcoming even for the deserving monks[9] may further indicate that the village population, comprising tillers of land, village craftsmen and certain other professional groups connected with cattle husbandry, could not have afforded large amount of alms-giving. In the *Baka Jātaka* we find a monk thus protesting: "But, Sir, we village

[1]*Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, I.6.18, 20.
[2]*Mahābhāṣya*,11.33.
[3]*Manu*, VIII. 243.
[4]*Mbh.*, Śānti Parva, 60.25.
[5]G.L. Adhya, *Early Indian Economics*, 200 BC-AD 300, p. 43.
[6]Ibid, p. 43; H. Chakraborty, *Early Brāhmi Records*, p. 56.
[7]*Dh. Pada.*, III, Bk. 26, story 11, p. 43.
[8]*Milinda*. tr. J.J. Jones, IV, 8.25.
[9]*Mahāvastu*, p. 197.

Brethren find it hard to get the requisites, if I give you this what shall I have to wear myself.'"[1]

It is noteworthy that the few instances of alms-giving by peasants and cowherds,[2] which are available to us, show that in keeping with their poor means, they mostly made gifts of cooked food which was generally spared out of their own meal. In the post-Mauryan period, we however, come across a couple of donative inscriptions recording gifts of caves to the Buddhist *Saṁgha* by ploughmen (*hālakiya*).[3] Even if we treat these instances as exceptional, still they definitely reflect a better economic status for atleast a small section of the ploughing community. How far this development may be co-related to the Mauryan state policy of promoting and safeguarding the interests of agricultural producers[4] can only be surmised in the absence of adequate evidence.

Artisans: As noted above the artisans, forming a much less homogeneous group as far as their economic status and nature of occupational crafts was concerned, are referred to in the early Pāli texts as functioning both in rural and urban centres.

Village Artisans: Artisans living and working in the villages, called *grāmaśilpin* by Pāṇini,[5] donot appear to have possessed any agricultural land. Hence, even though they helped in maintaining the self-sufficient character of the rural world, they were yet dependent on the agricultural section of population for their subsistence. In a non-monetary rural set up the artisans appear to have been bound to the village landed gentry by *jajamāni* ties,[6] which required artisans to attend to the requirements of the latter and in return for their services they were paid in kind generally around the harvest season.[7] However, not all village artisans seem to have functioned within a *jajamāni* framework. In the villages there was another category of artisans represented by the *Kāntaṭākṣa* who worked at their own residence and were independent artisans not particularly bound

[1]*Baka Jāt.*, I, no. 38.
[2]*Theragāthā*, Canto. XVI. 260. p. 354, *Udāna*, Meghiya, IV, III. 39, p. 46, *Mahākapi Jāt.*, V, no. 516, p. 38.
[3]Bhaja Bud. Cave Ins., *Lüd.*, no. 1084. p. 115; Sailarwadi Bud. Cave Ins., *Lüd.* no. 1121, p. 122.
[4]*AŚ*. III. 13; III. 14.
[5]*AA*. VI. 2. 62.
[6]Jaimal Rai, *Rural Urban Economy*, pp. 346, 373.
[7]Agnihotri, *Pātañjali Kālīna Bhārata*, pp. 312-13.

under engagement to anyone.[1] Craftsmen of the latter category very often constituted the dominant section of the population of a village. This is evident from references to villages of carpenters[2] contained in the *Jātakas*. This would imply not only production of goods on a much larger scale than would be required for local consumption, but also the existence of better social and economic competence of the artisans who, while stationed in the village, catered to a wider market.

Of the two categories of village craftsmen noted above, the one catering only to local demand was clearly not in a position to make gifts in large numbers. The fact perhaps accounts for the absence of many references in the early Pāli texts to gifts made by such village craftsmen. Such a reference, wherever it occurs, invariably reflects their poor economic status. This is particularly apparent from the nature of their gift-objects which generally consisted of either cooked food readily available in every household or their own craft products. Thus we hear of the garlandmaker making a gift of flowers.[3] Similarly a potter is known to have made gifts of almsbowls to the monks.[4] However, certain craft groups, which are heard of making gifts more often, such as that of the perfumers or the goldsmiths, were generally those whose products were either in greater demand or who dealt in costlier goods for which raw material had to be procured from outside. Such craftsmen enjoyed a greater margin of profit which accounted for their better financial standing.[5] Some of them even enjoyed the king's favour.[6]

Some sections of artisans which migrated to fast developing urban centres emerged as a much more affluent class. This is sufficiently evident from a large number of references to gifts made by them in the post-Mauryan period. The steady proliferation of industries, unprecedented rise in commodity production for local use and export purposes, growth of guild organisation and the Mauryan state patronage contributed to their affluence.[7] The donative offerings made by them not only reflect an unprecedented increase in their

[1]*AA*. V. 4.95, *Mahābhaṣya*. I. 4. 54, *Mahāummagga Jāt*., VI, no. 546, p. 188.
[2]*Alina-Citta Jāt*., II. p. 14, *Vaḍḍhakisūkara Jāt*., II. no. 283, p. 276.
[3]*Milinda*. IV. 8. 25.
[4]*Vinaya*, Nissaggiya, XXII.
[5]*Suci Jāt*., III. no. 387.
[6]Ibid.
[7]Jaimal Rai, *Rural Urban Economy*, p. 358.

economic competence but also in their social prestige. Gifts of caves by even low professional groups such as fisherman (*dāsaka*) and garlandmaker (*mālākāra*) indicate their economic prosperity resulting from a greater demand for the goods in which they dealt. Their new wealth now gained for them both recognition at the court[1] (Pāṇini refers to *rājaśilpin*;[2] a *Jātaka* story refers to a *rāja kumbhakāra*),[3] as well as giftmaking rights which had been denied to them by the brahmanical lawmakers uptil now.

During the centuries immediately following the Christian era a slight change in the otherwise unbending attitude of the lawmakers is perceptible; giftmaking for the śūdras, who served mostly as artisans and field labour, is especially praised.[4] It is deemed the most meritorious act through which they could achieve all their ends and could even attain brahmanhood in their next lives. The *Manusmṛti* indicates not only the existence of śūdra pupils but also of śūdra teachers who were capable of teaching even the brāhmaṇas.[5] Interestingly enough, even though śūdras, who engaged in industrial crafts were becoming prosperous, and were encouraged to make beautiful gifts, yet brāhmaṇas were strictly forbidden to accept them, except under exceptionally adverse conditions (e.g., for warding off death by starvation).[6] In normal circumstances if a pious brāhmaṇa sought gifts from the śūdras, he ran the risk of losing his *varṇa* status.[7] The above outlook is interesting for it throws light on the dilemma faced by the lawmakers at this time and also on their ingenuity in overcoming it by postulating a special code of conduct to be observed only in times of emergency (*āpatkāladharma*)[8] not only in this life but also in the next.

These ritualistic concessions were in fact granted to promote and safeguard the brāhmaṇa's own interests. Epigraphs show that in

[1]*Kuśa Jāt*., V, no. 531.
[2]*AA*, VI, 2.63.
[3]*Cullaka Seṭṭhi Jāt*., I, no. 4, p. 19.
[4]*Mbh*., Anuśāsana Parva, 118.18, 26.
[5]*Manu*, III, 156.
[6]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt*., XVII. 5; *Āpas. Dh. Sūt*., I.6.18, 14; *Manu*, X. 103-04, 107-08.
[7]*Manu*, XI. 24-25.
[8]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt*., XVII. 5. If the means for sustaining life cannot be promoted otherwise they may be accepted from a śūdra, *Āpas. Dh. Sūt*., I., 6.18.14; *Manu*, X. 104.

post-Mauryan times a considerable amount of the artisan's new wealth found its way into the hands of heterodox monks and their orders, thus depriving brāhmaṇas of their share. Perhaps to surmount this difficulty the lawmakers adopted a more lenient stance and relaxed giftmaking rules with regard to the affluent śūdras. In the *Mahābhārata,* śūdras possessed of great wealth but not generous to the brāhmaṇas are threatened with dire consequences.[1] The *Dharmaśāstras* ordain that pious brāhmaṇas gaining subsistence from the śūdras were not to be invited to *śrādha*,[2] thus clearly implying that at least some brāhmaṇas were disregarding such stipulations and were accepting these gifts. Even though the brāhmaṇas seemingly stooped low to accept gifts from the śūdras yet their conduct presumably was considered too derogatory to find mention in the brahmanical texts.

Out of one hundred and thirty-three Mathura Jaina votive inscriptions listed by Lüders, only twenty explicitly mention the vocation of the donors or that of their immediate kinsmen and out of these twenty as many as eleven are found to belong to various artisanal groups.[3] Sometimes these gifts were also in the form of caves and land or deposits of money for the maintenance of monks. The artisans also appear to be spending a considerable amount of their wealth on general charity, as may be inferred from a story given in the *Hatthipāla Jātaka.*[4] We learn that the weavers of Benaras used to divide all their earnings into five heaps; of these four were their own shares, but the fifth was given jointly. Like merchants the artisans who are sometimes called merchants themselves, such as the *Gandhīkavaṇiya* of Amarāvati Buddhist Pillar[5] incriptions, are known to build monasteries. The names of some of the monasteries recorded in the Mathura epigraphs of the Kuṣāṇa period, such as the *Suvarṇakāra vihāra*[6] (the monastery of goldsmiths) and the *Pravārika Vihāra* (the monastery of cloak-makers)[7] would clearly suggest their being constructed by members of that particular craft group.

[1]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 118.21.
[2]*Manu*, III, 164; X. 109-11; *Mbh*, Anuśāsana Parva, 90.11.
[3]H. Lüders, *A List of Brāhmi Inscriptions*, pp. 3-24.
[4]*Hatthipāla Jāt.*, IV, no. 509, p. 294.
[5]Amarāvati Bud. Pillar Ins., *Lüd,* no. 1230.
[6]*EI*, XIX, p. 68.
[7]Ibid., p. 66.

Thus as compared to peasants and village craftsmen the town based artisans were fast emerging as a prominent donor grouping during the post-Mauryan period.

Śreṇis as Donors

During the post-Mauryan period we come across *śreṇis* or guilds of craftsmen and traders, which paid interest on the capital invested with it by the donor and also served as the benefactor of the poor and other religious bodies and their members. As the *Vinaya* text shows, arrangements for the preparation and distribution of food and clothing to the *Saṁgha* was undertaken by guilds[1] even in Mauryan times or earlier. Buch[2] points out that the first thing the members of the guilds were required to do, after being organised in the form of an association was to draw up a document which would embody all the main items of work, upon which all should agree. This work comprised "the construction of a house of assembly, of a shed for (accommodation of travellers), a temple, a pool, or a garden, relief to the helpless or poor people."[3] It appears that relief to the poor, construction of public buildings and maintenance of temples were some of the main functions of the guilds.[4]

The members of the guilds shared not only common economic pursuits which enriched them but also common religious leanings which promoted collective religious endowments. Mostly drawn from mercantile and artisanal professional groups, members were generally inclined towards one of the two popular heterodox sects. Consequently the Buddhist and the Jaina *Saṁgha* turned out to be chief beneficiaries of charitable grants made by the guilds of merchants and artisans.[5]

Amongst the other corporate bodies making charitable endowments, the Buddhist *Saṁgha* itself appears to be prominent. The Buddhist *Saṁgha* which had itself all along thrived on munificent gifts received from kings and affluent members of society, had now turned into a donor.[6] The development not only suggests the *Saṁgha's*

[1]*Vinaya*, Nissaggiya, XXX-I; ibid., Pācittiya IX. IX. 1; XXXI. 1; XXXVI. 1.
[2]M.A. Buch, *Economic Life in Ancient India*, I, p. 362.
[3]*Br. Smṛ.*, XVII. 11-12.
[4]*Govt. Epigraphist Report*, 1915, p. 104, vide, M.A. Buch, op. cit., p. 362. An assembly of merchants from eighteen subdivisions of 79 districts, decide to set apart the income derived from merchandise for the repair of temples.
[5]Junnar Bud., Cave Ins., *Lüd.*, no. 1180.
[6]Bhilsa Topes, *Lüd.*, no. 267, ref. gifts of the *Saṁgha*.

new affluence,[1] but also bespeaks its greater involvement in proselytising activities as well as its efforts at promoting and safeguarding the interests of its members.

The Sanchi Stupa inscriptions recording gifts of *Bodha* committee or the *Bodhagoṭhi* are of special interest in this respect. Bühler regards *gosṭṭhi* as a committee of trustees in charge of a temple or of a charitable foundation,[2] and hence the *Boḍhagoṭhi* may have been in charge of running the affairs of the *Saṁgha.* In this capacity, *Bodhagoṭhi* must have exercised full control over the *Saṁgha's* finances and may have also been authorised to make charitable grants on behalf of the order.

[1]N.R. Ray, 'One indeed comes across such phrases as Saṁgha lands, Buddha lands, Buddha goods, Stūpa goods and Saṁgha goods', *Maurya and Post-Maurya Art*, p. 95.

[2]G. Bühler, 'Sānchi Stupa Ins.,' *EI*, II.

CHAPTER 4

Women and Heterodox Monks and the Source of their Gifts

WOMEN

As early as the Vedic period references to lady donors are not entirely lacking. The fifth book of the *Ṛgveda* alludes to bounteous ladies. But compared to the Vedic period, a larger number of notices of women donors appear in post-Vedic texts and epigraphs. It is significant however, that majority of these references are forthcoming from heterodox literature especially the Buddhist texts.

Women figure in Pāli literature both as giving daily alms of cooked food to *bhikkhus* as well as making rich donations of precious jewellery and other articles to the Buddhist *Saṁgha.* In the *Udāna* Suppavāsa, the daughter of the Koliyan *rājā* is said to have "invited the order of monks headed by the Buddha to seven days food."[1] Likewise according to the *Therīgāthā* Selā performed a grand feast of offering and worship to the Buddha.[2] Similar notices are also contained in the *Dhammapada.*[3] According to the *Milindapañho*, an important woman lay follower had supported the venerable Assagutta for thirty years.[4] Women are also known to personally supervise and attend to the needs of the dining brāhmaṇas and *śramaṇas.*[5] Some amongst them such as Sāmā[6] are even known to have undertaken the construction of *vihāras* for the *Saṁgha.* From the *Cullavagga* we learn that Viśākhā, the mother of Mīgara, was anxious to have a storeyed building (*prāsāda*) built for the use of the *Saṁgha.*[7] Women donors are even known to build rest-houses for night-shelter.[8]

[1]*Udāna*, Mucalinda, II, VIII, 17.

[2]*Therīgāthā*, XXXV, Selā.

[3]*Dh. Pada.*, Bk. 26, Story 32; Bk. 5, Story 15.

[4]*Milinda*. I. 15.

[5]*VV*, Sirima's Mansion, I. 16.

[6]*Kanvera Jāt.*, III, no. 318.

[7]*CV*, VI.14.1.

[8]*Vinaya*, Suttavibhanga (Pācittiya), VI. 1.

Incidentally whereas only occasional references to women donors are furnished by the pre-Mauryan and Mauryan sources, the Jaina and Buddhist votive inscriptions of the post-Mauryan period abound with such references. Out of one hundred and thirty-three post-Mauryan votive records found at Mathura which are listed by Lüders,[1] while some donot give information regarding donor's identity, still as many as forty-five votive donations are explicitly recorded in the name of women donors. If the statistical data furnished by them is of any help, then the fact that more than one-third of the donors at Mathura were ladies would positively establish their importance as a donor grouping during the post-Mauryan period.

The phenomenon of women independently giving alms and making rich gifts does bespeak a socially more active and economically more gainful and varied life for them at this time. But such an impression is not re-affirmed by our brahmanical sources. References to women donors are scarce in them. As compared to their Buddhist counterparts, women belonging to the brahmanical order would appear to have laboured under considerable social constraints. It needs to be seen therefore whether the two sets of literature really reflect two distinct social ethos or they can be attributed to changes occurring in terms of time and space.

One possible explanation could be that whereas the brahmanical writers continued to write against the pre-urban social background, the heterodox literature reflects mainly the urban milieu in which traders, artisans and members of other professional groupings figured prominently. Although it is not possible to present statistics on the basis of literature, our analysis of inscriptional evidence shows that out of the women donors whose names occur in Sanchi Buddhist Stupa I inscriptions, twenty-four are from Ujjain[2]; eleven from Nandinagar;[3] five from Kurāragṛha;[4] four each from Puṣkara[5] and Kurar;[6] two from Mahiṣmati[7] and one each from Puṇyavardhana[8] and Pematā.[9]

[1]*Lüd*., nos. 16-149, pp. 3-24.
[2]Ibid, 216, 218-228, 231, 302, 207, 385, 406, 407, 409-411, 413-415, 560.
[3]Ibid, 325, 327, 328, 369, 402, 463-467, 512, 604.
[4]Ibid, 230, 232, 233, 426, 558.
[5]Ibid, 479-482.
[6]Ibid, 431, 435-437.
[7]Ibid, 497, 501.
[8]Ibid, 366.
[9]Ibid, 545.

Even the social groupings from which women donors are known to be mostly drawn were generally urban based. For example ladies belonging to royal families, which may be expected to have been stationed mostly in capital cities and towns, figure as donors in early Pāli texts. From the Mauryan period, instances of giftmaking by queens are recorded in inscriptions also; apparently these are more definite. Thus in one of his edicts Aśoka specially wants the donation to be recorded in the name of his second queen.[1] Similarly while the Manchāpuri cave inscription records the construction of a temple of the *arhats* and a cave for the *Śramaṇas* by the chief queen of Khāravela,[2] the Nānāghāt inscription describes the munificent gifts made by the Sātavāhana queen Nāganikā.[3] Several Buddhist stupa and cave inscriptions at Sānchi, Nāsik and Kanheri record gifts made by royal princesses[4]. One of the Nāsik cave inscription of the time of Nahapāna records the gift of a cave by Dakṣamitrā, the wife of Ūṣāvadāta, for religious progress.[5]

A category of urban based women donors which won considerable approbation and recognition from society by its numerous religious benefactions was that of the courtesans. In the new urban setting of the time of the Buddha, they emerged as an extremely affluent professional grouping.[6] In fact, Āmbrapāli, the famous courtesan of Vaiśāli[7] is placed in the same category of Gautama Buddha patrons[8] as King Bimbisāra, the royal physician Jīvaka and the excessively rich *setthi* Anāthapiṇḍika, who possessed enough wealth to buy Prince Jeta's pleasuance garden by covering it with pieces of gold.

Another women donor grouping having close urban association was that of the nuns belonging to heterodox orders. But the economic group from which women donors are known to be most extensively drawn were mercantile and artisanal sections of the society. In fact, amongst women donors *sārtha-vāhinis*[9] and other female relatives

[1]Allahabad Kosam Queen's P.E., *CII*, I, p. 159.
[2]Manchāpuri Cave Ins. (of the chief Queen of Khāravela), *EI*., XIII, p. 159.
[3]Nānāghāt Cave Ins. (of Nāganikā), *SI*, Bk. II, no. 82.
[4]*Lüd*., nos. 1186, 1123, 1021, 1132, 1134, 169.
[5]Nāsik Cave Ins. (of the time of Nahapāna), *SI*, Bk. II, no. 60.
[6]*Lüd*., no. 102. It records the setting up of a shrine by the Nadā courtesan Vasu.
[7]*MV*, VI, 30.5.
[8]*Mahāparinibbana Sutta*, II, 19.
[9]*Lüd*., no. 30, 1065.

of seṭṭhis[1] and rich merchants[2] are recorded to have made maximum number of religious donations during the post-Mauryan period.

Taking into account the urban base of the majority of women donors as well as the fact that ladies belonging to artisanal and mercantile classes figured more prominently as donors, it would be perhaps safe to assume that it was the emergent commercial spirit of the age which was to an extent responsible for transforming a section of women into an important category of donors; their religious fervour and munificent spirit matching that of their male relations.

The brahmanical theorists on the other hand seem to have continued idealising the pastoral social ethos. They sought to perpetuate it by decrying and resisting all change connected with the growth of private property, urban development and commercial enterprise. It was perhaps their rigid outlook which prevented them from presenting women in a more liberal light. They even seem reluctant to concede to women extensive right to property or inheritance. According to them the only property to which women could lay any claim was *strīdhana*. Although it literally means woman's property but in actual fact it had a very limited technical connotation. According to Manu only six kinds of gifts constitute a woman's *strīdhana*[3]. What was given before the nuptial fire (*adhyāgni*), what was given on the bridal procession (*adhyavahanika*), what was given in token of love and what was received from her brother, mother or father that is called the sixfold property of a woman." *Strīdhana* according to Manu thus excludes not only all inherited property but also gifts received from any relation other than her own close kinsmen. Even property acquired by her labour through the pursuit of mechanical arts was not treated as *strīdhana*. It was her husband who was regarded its actual owner.[4] Manu however, accepts the *Dharma Sūtra*[5] injunction that only daughters could inherit the *strīdhana* of their mother.

[1] *Lüd.*, no. 24, 206, 207, 246.

[2] Ibid, no. 993, 1127.

[3] *Manu*, IX, 194.

[4] Ibid, VIII, 416, Katyāyana elaborates on this and states. 'Whatever wealth she may gain by arts, as by painting or spinning, or may receive on account of her friendship from any but her kindered, her lord (husband) has dominion over it.'

[5] *Gauṭ. Dh. Sūt*, XXVIII. 24; *Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, II. 6.14.9; *Baudh. Dh. Sūt.*, II. 2. 49; *Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, VII. 46.

Yājñavalkya[1] later slightly widened the scope of *strīdhana* and took it to include certain other kinds of wealth as well such as *adhivedanika* (what was presented on her husband's marrying another wife); *śulka* (bride's fee which is obtained as the price of household utensils, of beasts of burden, of milch cattle, ornaments and slaves);[2] and *anvādheya* (whatever is obtained after marriage from the family of her husband as also from her cognate relations).

Kauṭilya's definition of *strīdhana* is more pragmatic and includes within it means of subsistence and what could be tied on the body (ornaments and jewellery)[3]. He also mentions *adhivedanika*, *anvādheya*, *śulka*, and *bandhudatta* (whatever is given by relations) in connection with *strīdhana*.

It is, infact, much later on at the turn of the tenth century AD that Mitākṣara for the first time employed *strīdhana* more in its etymological sense. According to him it includes property of any description belonging to a woman. Even property inherited by her at a partition is categorised as *strīdhana*. Dāyabhāga ruling in this respect is more conventional and although gifts made by strangers at the time of marriage are regarded as constituting *strīdhana* of a woman, but property inherited or obtained by her by mechanical arts is very definitely excluded from its purview.[4]

Mitākṣara's definition of *strīdhana* would seem to comprehend *saudāyika* and *Yautaka* kinds of property also, to which some of the smṛtikāras have made a reference. *Saudāyika*, according to Kātyāyana is that property which is obtained by a married woman or by a maiden in her husband's or father's house from her brother or from her parents.[5] Vyāsa, however, takes it to mean "whatever is obtained by a woman as a maiden at the time of marriage and after marriage from the house of her father or husband."[6] The other term *Yautaka* would seem to be used by Manu more in the sense of *strīdhana* when he states: "whatever is the *Yautaka* of the mother goes to the maiden daughter and not to the married daughter or son."[7]

[1] *Yaj. Smṛ.*, II. 143.

[2] P V. Kane, *Hist. Dh. S.*, III, p. 774.

[3] *AŚ.*, III. 2. *vrittirābadhyam vā strīdhanam.*

[4] *Dāyabhāga*, IV. 1.19.

[5] Vide, P.V. Kane, *Hist Dh. S.*, III, p. 775.

[6] Ibid, p. 778.

[7] *Manu*, IX. 131.

Our evidence thus shows that women during the period under study very definitely lay claim to certain amount of property; but their absolute right of disposal over it is not so clearly defined. Although the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* lays down in general that the wife is the mistress of her *strīdhana*[1] yet it does not say anything about her specific powers regarding its sale or gift. The Smṛtikāras, however, are very explicit in their injunction that a woman exercises only a qualified right of ownership over all immovable property received as gift or inherited by her. She could not alienate it through sale, mortgage or gift without the consent of the next heir. But even over much of her movable property, a woman's right of disposal was subject to the control of her husband.[2] In fact, according to Kauṭilya[3] and other Dharmaśāstra writers, a husband under certain circumstances had the power to appropriate his wife's *strīdhana* without having to ever return it.

It cannot, however, be maintained that these regulations regarding *strīdhana* applied only to ladies belonging to the brahmanical order. In fact, even from Buddhist source we learn how women were not completely free to make gifts and had to secure the prior permission of men members of their family. In the *Suvaṇṇamiga Jātaka*, a wife thus addresses her husband. "I wish my lord, to give alms to our family priests."[4] That women generally may have been allowed a free hand in gift distribution is apparent from the husband's reply. "Very well my dear, give them just what you please."

The general economic dependence of women on their menfolk, especially in matters of giftmaking can hardly be doubted. Except courtesans,[5] nuns[6] and two other women donors whose names alone occur,[7] the rest of the women donors are described in the Mathura Jaina votive records as wife, mother, daughter-in-law, daughter and more rarely as sisters. Incidentally, quite a few women donors of Mathura are stated to have been first wives of their husbands.[8] In a

[1]*Tai-Saṁ.*, VI. 2. 1.1.

[2]*Manu*, IX, 199. The wife ought not to spend anything even from her *strīdhana* property without her husband's sanction.

[3]*AŚ*, III, 2.152. In calamities such as disease and famine, in warding off dangers and in charitable acts, the husband too may make use of this property.

[4]*Suvannamiga Jāt.*, III, no. 359.

[5]*VV*, Sirimā's Mansion, I. 16.

[6]*Lüd.*, nos. 327-28, 369, 402, 512.

[7]Ibid, 92, 144.

[8]Ibid, 27, 48, 50, 122.

polygamous society, woman's position as first wife may have enhanced her economic status in the family, enabling her to undertake gifts.

As far as the position of courtesans as donors is concerned, the Nādā courtesan (*gaṇikā*) Vāsū is described only as the daughter of the Ādā courtesan Loṇa Śobhikā.[1] The name of her father or brother is not given. The omission of the names of the male members of the family no doubt suggest the economic independence of this category of women donors. As Moti Chandra points out: "It is significant that though the *gaṇikas* were not free persons legally, they had full authority over the assets which consisted of jewellery, income from salary and the gifts received from their lovers.[2]

That dāna by women was made mostly out of their personal belongings would seem a safe inference based upon an analysis of the gift objects generally bestowed by them. Our sources reveal that besides giving alms of cooked meal to beggars and religious mendicants, women donors also gifted their ornaments and jewellery. Sumanā is known to have gifted her girdle,[3] and Viśākhā is said to have donated her ornaments worth hundred and nine thousand crores in order to build a monastery.[4] Occasionally women are even known to have woven cloth, especially for the purpose of gift.[5] But maximum number of women donors are found in the Buddhist and Jaina votive inscriptions recording installation of images, pillars, gateways etc. Since young girls are also known to make gifts,[6] the possibility cannot be ruled out that atleast some giftmaking by women may have been undertaken out of common family earnings also.

Although no positive reference to gift of land by women occurs in the Brahmanical texts, notices of ladies undertaking the construction of monasteries and rest-houses are quite common in the post-Mauryan Buddhist sources.[7] Significantly the Kuda Buddhist cave inscription records the gift of a *chaitya-ghara* by a brāhmaṇa woman.[8] The

[1]*Lüd.*, no. 102.

[2]Motichandra, *The World of Courtesan*, p. 48.

[3]*Therigātha*, XVI. Sumanā; XXIV, Mettikā.

[4]*VV*, Monastery Mansion, IV. 6.44.

[5]Ibid, Elephant Mansion, IV. 3.41. At that time a lay devotee a woman who lived in Banaras, had a pair of robes woven for the Blessed One.

[6]*Itivutthaka*, Splendid Mansion. III. 1.79. A young girl who was intent on giving alms.

[7]*Lüd.*, nos. 993, 1965, 1073, 1076, 1127, 1141.

[8]Ibid, no. 1050.

evidence is interesting for far from underlining any sharp distinctions between the brahmanical and Buddhist social orders, it seems to accentuate the regional variations in local customs; for instance, notices of gift of *caitya-halls* by women are forthcoming mostly from the Maharashtra region. The evidence also affirms the growing importance of landed property during the centuries immediately preceding and following the Christian era. The rise in the number of gifts made by women in the the post-Mauryan period therefore does not necessarily reflect any slackening of the male authority in the family. On the contrary it goes to prove that with the extension of both movable and immovable forms of private property, the economic competence of women belonging to certain social strata had grown considerably by the opening centuries of the Christian era.

Heterodox Monks

During the post-Mauryan period we come across a class of donors viz., the members of heterodox orders who had hitherto figured only as donees. Like the Buddhist *Saṁgha*, monks and nuns of both the Jaina and Buddhist orders are also known to have made similar gifts to Buddhist and Jaina shrines. Their gifts are recorded in inscriptions discovered at Mathura, Sanchi, Sarnath, Bharhut, Nāsik, Bodhgaya, Besnagar, Junnar, Kanheri, Karle, Kuda, Bedsa etc.

According to the rules of monastic discipline members of both the Buddhist and Jaina orders are strictly forbidden to own any property or accept gifts beyond the scale of articles allowed to them by their respective orders. The question therefore arises what was the source of gifts made by them?

The Jaina grants recorded chiefly in Mathura inscriptions create no problem. They refer to the persons, mostly lay followers, who were induced by monks and nuns to provide the requisite means for the gift. The Mathura Jaina Panel inscription, for example, records the dedication of an image by the daughter of Grahadatta at the request of Dhamatha, a female pupil of Āryyā Araha.[1] Here, as in the case of most other Jaina votive records, the actual credit for making gift is never claimed by the monk or the nun.

Buddhist donative inscriptions, although recording instances of similar gifts, donot throw any such light on the problem. In the absence of any positive evidence, scholars have advanced only conjec-

[1] *Lüd.*, no. 75, also nos. 30, 34, 67, 70, 74, 121 etc.

tures. H. Kern[1] finding unacceptable the very idea of a monk owning anything so as to be in a position to make gifts has doubted the very correctness of the reading of the passage, *'bhikhunām deya dhamani'* in donative inscriptions. The problem, however, cannot be dismissed so easily, especially when F.S. Grouse affirms the reading to be unmistakably clear.[2] Moreover, even if the reading of the crucial passage is considered erroneous, the argument is not tenable in face of hundreds of other epigraphs providing similar information.

Theoretically monks and nuns were not supposed to possess anything, but the case seems to be different in actual practice. For in the *Cullavagga* we get reference to "a certain *bhikkhu* who was on an alms-pilgrimage and had made a vow not to partake of the first food given to him until he had already given of it either to a *bhikkhu* or to a *bhikkhuni*."[3] The practice, according to the same source, had to be checked in view of the resentment expressed by lay donors.[4] It was later, however, reinforced by the Mahāyānist Vinaya dictates contained in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*. Monks were now required to set aside one-fourth of the food collected as alms for brother monks, one half for the poor and the afflicted, and keep just the remaining one-fourth for oneself.[5]

Possible sources of gifts made by the monks: Marshall believes that the option to revert to layman's life was always open to monks, despite their having nominally relinquished all rights over their property. They could still "have certain things which it was lawful for them to possess, made and paid for out of their own estate."[6] It was property thus owned which in his view may have served as a source of gifts made by them. Though it is difficult to fully agree with Marshall's suggestion which clearly negates the cardinal principle of non-possession of any property by monks, yet it may be pointed out that in the Buddhist donative records members of the *Saṁgha* undertaking gifts of a more impressive kind, such as cave dwellings (*lena*) are invariably designated as *'pavaita'*[7] or *'pavajita'*.[8] They are called the

[1] H. Kern, 'The Inscriptions of Junnar', *IA*, VI, p. 40.
[2] F.S. Grouse, Mathura Ins., op. cit., p. 218.
[3] *CV*, X. 13.1.
[4] Ibid, 15.1.
[5] N. Dutt, *Aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism and its Relation to Hinayāna*, p. 316.
[6] Marshall, *Monuments of Sāñchi.*
[7] *Pavaita*, cf. *Lüd.*, nos. 1040, 1108.
[8] Ibid, 999, 1016, 3.

'*aṁtevāsin*'[1] (living near the guru)[2] of some senior monk (*bhadaṁta*). The fact is significant for it leads one to believe that these gifts were made only by novices or monks on probation who had though been awarded '*pabbajjā*' (or were initiated by the teacher), had yet to be granted '*upasampadā*' (or formal recognition as full-fledged members of the order) by the *Saṁgha*,[3] when they were required to finally renounce their claims to all property. That property was not always completely renounced immediately after entering the *Saṁgha* would be clear from the following account contained in the *Devadhamma Jātaka* of a squire of Sāvatthi who, when he was joining the Brotherhood, "caused to be built for himself a chamber to live, a room for the fire, and a storeroom, and not till he had stocked his storeroom with *ghee*, rice and the like, did he finally join. Even after he had become a brother, he used to send for his servants and make them cook him what he liked to eat. He was richly provided with the requisites."[4] Hence as *aṁtevāsins* or student disciples monks may have continued to be in a position to make gifts of small cave dwellings to the order.

Moreover during the post-Mauryan period under the aegis of Mahāyānism a considerable relaxation in the *Vinaya* rule pertaining to the acceptance of more opulent variety of alms by the monks is clearly perceptible. Prophetic words, ascribed to the Buddha, regarding acceptance of silver, gold, fields, sites, herds, slaves and maids by monks in days to come[5] may, in fact, be taken to mirror the actual state of affairs at this time. That the warning contained in the *Theragāthā* was occasioned by the already prevailing practice may be easily surmised from the following injunction made in the *Mahāvagga*. "In case, O *Bhikkhus*, to a *bhikkhu*, who has entered upon *vassa*, a woman makes an offer (in these words), come, Venerable Sir, I give you gold, or I give you bullion."[6] Monks led a fairly prosperous life as a result of the acceptance of opulent gifts. A *Pañcatantra*[7] tale refers to a monk named Devasarman, who in course of time had gained a large fortune through the acquisition of

[1]*Aṁtevāsin*, cf. *Lüd.*, nos. 1107, 303, 569, 800, 1016, 1094.
[2]S.B. Deo. *History of Jaina Monachism*, p. 217.
[3]Gokuldas De, *Democracy in Early Buddhist Saṁgha*, p. 55.
[4]*Devadhamma Jāt.*, I, no. 6, p. 23.
[5]*Therāgāthā*, XVII, 258, Phussa, p. 337.
[6]*MV*, III. 11. 3.
[7]*Pañcatantra*, Story 30, p. 57.

fine garments of excellence, which various pious people had presented to him. However biased and exaggerated the story may be, it still agrees to a large extent with what we learn from the Buddhist source itself about the riches acquired by the monasteries at this time. The *Mahāvagga* informs us that when people went round the *vihāras* they felt annoyed, murmured and became indignant saying: 'These śākīyaputtiya *śamaṇas* are becoming storers of goods, like the Magadha king Seṇiya Bimbisāra."[1] In the *Therīgāthā* we hear of a lay devotee who had her ornaments made into an ingot of gold and placed it in the Buddha's shrine[2] while another is said to have presented a jewelled girdle to the order.[3] Reference to monasteries possessing vessels of solid beaten gold are also available.[4] That individual monks were not totally averse to appropriating some of the gifts already dedicated to the *Saṁgha* is sufficiently apparent from the '*Patimokkha*' rule: "Whichever *bhikkhu* shall cause to be diverted to himself any benefit already dedicated shall be charged with the *pācittiya* offence involving forfeiture."[5] It is thus possible to conclude that such monks may well have been in a position to afford gifts.[6]

An analysis of our data shows that monks and nuns made endowments of chiefly structural parts, such as railings, umbrella-posts, Buddha images, pillars of Buddhist shrines, etc. Considering the simple craftsmanship that is required to make these artefacts, in all probability donors themselves may have been fashioning them. In fact, we do get references to monks who were deft in the art of dyeing and tailoring robes[7] and hence the possibility of some monks possessing mason's skill as well cannot be ruled out. That the practice for donor to fashion the object himself was common is evident from a the Kārle Buddhist Cave inscription which tells us that Samika, the son of Veṇuvāsa, a carpenter, himself made the doorway of the

[1]*MV*, VI. 15. 9; VIII. 9·1; At that time the *Saṁgha's* store room was overfull of clothes.
[2]*Therīgāthā*, XXXVI.
[3]Ibid, Mettikā, XXIV. p. 28.
[4]*Dh. Pada*, Vol. III. Bk. 25, Story 12, p. 274.
[5]*Patimokkha*, Vinaya, *SBE*, Vol. XIII, p. 30.
[6]N.R. Ray, *Maurya and post-Maurya Art*, p. 95. In the donative records on monuments of early Buddhist narrative art one comes across donations and gifts made by individual monks and nuns; evidently they were owners of property.
[7]*Milinda*, VI. 1.7.

caves.[1] However, in view of a very large number of such donations made by this category of donors coupled with the fact that they were being made by nuns also, might somewhat reduce the likelihood of monks themselves designing gift-objects. The none too expensive character of these gift-objects might nevertheless bring them well within the modest means of monks and nuns.

It appears that monks and nuns possessed atleast some means to be in a position to make certain gifts. Probably they also raised funds for these gifts through begging. Bühler is inclined to believe that monks and nuns obtained by begging the money required for making the rails and pillars.[2] Whereas, in the absence of any positive evidence proving the contrary, Bühler's suggestion cannot be rejected offhand, in the light of the little evidence which is forthcoming, it seems that the construction of residential quarters was undertaken by monks themselves. The Buddhist texts contain instances of monks begging for building materials as well as artisanal labour required for construction of monasteries. The *Manikaṇṭha Jātaka* recounts the story of some Brethern who lived in Alvi and went "begging from all quarters the material for houses which they were getting made for themselves. They were for ever dinning and dinning: "Give us a man, give us somebody to do servant's work and so forth."[3] In such cases, probably collection of requisite materials was done by a joint body of monks, but the chief monk who supervised the actual construction work,[4] put down his name as the donor.

Lüders, however, feels that money for gifts was raised by monks not through general alms-begging but was mostly sought from their own relatives and acquaintances.[5] The same view is also expressed by A.M. Shastri who maintains that monks could always achieve religious merit by inducing their relatives "to make grants for specific works, and as the money was received by the executors of works through monks and nuns, their own names were recorded as those of donors."[6]

[1] *Cave Temples of Western India*, no. 6, p. 30.
[2] *EI*, II, p. 93.
[3] *Manikantha Jāt.*, II, no, 253.
[4] *Lüd.*, no. 987. The work, (building of a *caitya*) was executed by *bhadaṁta* Bodhika.
[5] H. Lüders, Bharhut Inscriptions. *CII*, II, part. II, p. 2.
[6] Ajay Mitra Shastri, *An Outline of Early Buddhism*, p. 139.

What undermine the plausibility of such as assumption are the parallel Jaina votive inscriptions of the same period. If the Jainas could be forthright in stating the true position, why was it not so in the case of their Buddhist counterparts ? Besides we do find in the two Sārnath Buddhist epigraphic records of the time of Kaniṣka, of which Shastri himself takes note, the donor monk's name is bracketed with that of other donors Mahākṣatrapa Kharapallana and Kṣatrapa *Vānaspara*,[1] thereby at least partly assigning the credit to the actual donors. But since most inscriptions mention the name of the donor monk, it is suggested that instead of monks urging their relatives to make gifts on their (i.e. monks') behalf[2] the lay donors in order to show their respect for the monk, offered to make gifts in the latter's name, while they themselves chose to remain completely anonymous. In fact, it would appear that since the spiritually advanced monks would have degnied to accept any material gifts from their lay admirers, it was the only way in which the latter could express their veneration. The Kārle Buddhist inscription records the gift of the cost of the pillar by Satimitra from Sopāraka out of respect for his maternal uncle the Bhadaṁta Dhamutrāya.[3]

Although Buddhist monks and nuns may have been easily in a position to make gifts, either by specifically begging for them or out of the property they may have continued to own as *antevāsins* or even out of the gifts they themselves received, yet greater possibility seems to be that as in the case of their Jaina counterparts most of these gifts were made on their behalf by the lay donors. In that case the Buddhist monks and nuns may be regarded as donors in a very limited sense.

[1] Sārnath Bud. Image Ins., *Lüd.*, no. 926; Sārnath Bud. Umbrella post Ins., *Lüd.* no. 925.
[2] The view put forth by H. Lüders and A.M. Shastri, supra, p. 80.
[3] Kārle Cave Ins., *Inscription from the Cave Temples of Western India*, no. 8, p. 31.

CHAPTER 5

Brāhmaṇas and Renouncers as Receivers

Besides donor, the other party vitally involved in the act of giftmaking is the donee, for one gives only when there is someone to receive. By inverse logic, it may also be maintained that if there is someone capable of giving there will always be others to receive it, for parasitical tendency runs latent in human nature. In fact, all members of a society must necessarily fall into either of the two categories of donor and donee to keep up the social order. At times donee may turn donor to another set of donees and vice versa. The fact of donor and donee changing roles in different circumstances is sufficiently borne out by our sources.[1] Members of heterodox orders and rich *mahāsāla* brāhmaṇas had initially constituted donee class but later became donors.

BRĀHMAṆAS

1. Why and How Brāhmaṇas Emerged as the Chief Category of Donees?

At the beginning of the sixth century B.C. brāhmaṇas stand out as the chief and the most dominant category of donees receiving spontaneous veneration and gifts. Several factors would seem to account for this development. The more important of them being the image which had formed in the popular mind associating brāhmaṇas with profound Vedic learning and spirituality.

In the early Vedic period the use of the appellation brāhmaṇa was strictly restricted to only one of the numerous categories of priests engaged in the performance of Vedic sacrifices.[2] It was only later

[1]*Ang. Nik.*, V.XX.195. Then those Licchavis presented brāhmaṇa Pinigiyanin with five hundred upper robes and brāhmaṇa Pinigiyanin presented them to the Exalted one.

[2]*RV.*, II.1.2; 8.91.10.

that it came to loosely designate not only the entire sacerdotal class but also teachers, sages and others engaged in activities of a religio-intellectual nature, which by later Vedic times had come to be associated exclusively with the brāhmaṇa *varṇa*. The fact that right up till the end of the Vedic period, birth although becoming increasingly important[1] still did not constitute the only factor conferring brahmanahood on a person[2] is also significant. It tended to ensure and emphasise his inherent worthiness as donee. Hence, as repositories of all religious knowledge, especially that pertaining to Vedic learning, the brāhmaṇas became objects of deep respect while their well-being became the direct concern of the society as a whole.

Universal respect which brāhmaṇas inspired had also its source in the austere lifestyle and high moral standard which came to be associated with the concept of ideal brāhmaṇa in his role of teacher, ascetic and *brahmacārin*. Renunciation of worldly life, practice of austerity and penance, complete dedication to the quest for spiritual knowledge by those brāhmaṇas who tried to live up to this ideal, imbued the rest of the class with a religious dignity. It made their blessings as well as their services, in matters temporal and spiritual, much sought after both by kings and common folk.

Monopolistic hold over sacrificial ritualism: Their duties as sacrificial priests further enabled the brāhmaṇas to emerge as a dominant category of donees enjoying large and opulent gifts. One is easily struck by the remarkable phenomenon of brāhmaṇas, while leading householder's life of ease and comparative opulence made possible through these gifts and still manifesting religious dignity and an air of condescension towards other sections of society. In the *Dīgha Nikāya* we come across a sarcastic comment: "Leaving the world means little power and little gain, to be a brahmin brings great power and great gain."[3]

Brāhmaṇas came to wield a monopolistic hold over sacrificial ritualism due to a number of reasons. We learn from the later Vedic texts that brāhmaṇas gradually arrogated to themselves the supreme position of superintending priests, enjoyed earlier by the *hota*, till by the end of the later Vedic period, all members of priestly

[1]*Ait. Br.*, VIII, 24; *Tai. Br.* 1. 4.4.

[2]*Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 4.4.1.

[3]*Dīg. Nik.*, XIX; Mahāgovinda Suttanta, II. 247.

order came to be drawn exclusively from the brāhmaṇa *varṇa.* It is categorically maintained in the *Kātyāyana Śrauta Sūtra* that to officiate and eat at sacrifices only brāhmaṇas are eligible.[1] As R.N. Sharma points out, no instance is forthcoming in the Buddhist texts that refers to a non-brāhmaṇa officiating as priest at any sacrifice; a fact which decisively goes to establish that the brāhmaṇas alone acted as priests.[2] Perhaps the same fact is sought to be reiterated in the *Sankhāyana Śrauta Sūtra* which puts forth the maxim that nobody should serve as a priest without proving his descent from three or ten generations of ṛṣis.[3]

The growth in sacerdotal functions and powers of the brāhmaṇas may have been a development related to the eastward march of Vedic Aryans. The ensuing process of assimilation at work between Vedic and non-Vedic cultural forces led to the induction of many primitive rituals and magical influences into the Vedic religious fold;[4] thereby considerably widening the scope for the exercise of power and jurisdiction by the brāhmaṇas. References contained in the *Arthaśāstra* to the worship of rats and snakes clearly affirm that totemism of the aboriginal population was coming into vogue amongst the Hindus at this time.[5] But whatever may have been the process of assimilation, the brāhmaṇas were no doubt quick to capitalise the situation arising from the introduction of complex sacrificial ceremonialism. It enabled them to create better opportunities as well as greater number of occasions for extracting gifts from their wealthy patrons. There is a story contained in the *Sutta Nipāta* which describes how the brāhmaṇas seeing the great wealth and splendour of king Okkaka began to covet it. They persuaded the latter to offer a big sacrifice, so that they themselves could partake of some of that wealth in the form of gifts.[6]

To extract gifts from their princely patrons, the brāhmaṇa priests very often resorted to moral blackmailing or even tried to play on the blind faith and superstitious fears of the former.[7] In the *Dhammapada*

[1] *Kāt. Śr. Sut.*, I.2.8.
[2] R.N. Sharma, *Brāhmins*, p. 111.
[3] *Sānkh. Śr. Sūt.*, 18.14.8.
[4] M.G. Bhagat. 'The above evidence indicates the association of the Aryan sacrifices with the pre-Aryan magical rites,' *Ancient Indian Asceticism*, p. 71.
[5] B.N. Datta, *DHR*, p. 293.
[6] *Sut. Nip.*, II.7.299-309.
[7] *Maj. Nik.*, II.45.1., *Srābhanga Jāt.*, V, no. 622, p. 66.

we come across a reference of a king, who on enquiring, "by what means can the plague with which we are afflicted be abated", is told to offer sacrifice[1]. Similarly the occasions enumerated in the *Aśvalāyana Gṛhya Sūtra* for the performance of sacrifice such as "If a dove flies against his house or towards it",[2] would show the extent to which blind faith and superstitious fear had already crept into Brahmanism by this time.[3]

What appears to have further provided a fillip to the growth of sacrificial ritualism was the self-interest of kings. As shown elsewhere[4] the latter in order to gain political stability and validation for their kingly power not only found a ready means in the Vedic sacrifices[5] but also a willing ally in their priestly exponents. Consequently, Vedic sacrifices during the early part of our period appear to have served the politico-religious needs of just two categories of people, the princely sacrificers and their brāhmaṇa officiants. Both of them apparently stood to gain from it, the former by acquiring legal mandate for their kingly power and the latter in the form of munificent gifts liberally bestowed by their patrons. The *Mahābhārata* refers to one such monarch who with a delighted heart, placed heaps of gold on diverse spots and distributing the immense wealth to the brāhmaṇas looked glorious like Kubera.[6] Similarly the early Pāli texts make frequent allusions to great sacrifices (*mahāyajñas*) such as the *Aśvamedha*, *Puruṣamedha* and the *Vājapeya* being performed by kings.[7] In fact, as late as the post-Mauryan period we find the Śunga and the Śatavāhana rulers performing these great Vedic sacrifices[8] to consolidate their political power and to bolster their imperial image, which showed occasional signs of sagging in the face of foreign threat.

Brāhmaṇa royal priests wielding inordinate influence with the king: It

[1] *Dh. Pada.*, Bk. 21, Story I.
[2] *Aśva. Gr. Sūt*, III. 7.7.10.
[3] *Lohakumbhi Jāt.*, III, no. 314, p. 30.
[4] Supra, p. 45.
[5] *Mbh.*, Sabhā-Parva, 12.11. One already in possession of a kingdom desireth all the attributes of an emperor by means of that sacrifice which aideth a king in acquiring the attributes of Varuṇa.
[6] Ibid., 4.25-27.
[7] B.G. Gokhale, 'Brāhmaṇas in Early Buddhist Literature', *JIH*, XLVIII, p. 54.
[8] *Mahābhāṣya*, III.2.123; Ayodhyā Ins. *EI*, XX, p. 54; Nānāghāt Cave Ins. (of Nāganikā), *SI*, Bk. II, no. 82.

was perhaps in their position as royal priests that brāhmaṇas succeeded not only in wielding excessive influence at the court in matters both religious and temporal[1] but also acquired great affluence mainly through gifts showered on them by their royal patrons[2] in addition to their usual salaries.[3] The influence of the royal priests had its source in the changed political condition, although some other factors such as the growing hereditary character of his post,[4] his knowledge of occult sciences[5] and close personal association with the king[6] were equally responsible. The dissolution of the tribal order to some extent even corroded family ties, so that the need for a king to seek the advice of his relatives and friends on all important issues as we find Dhṛtarāṣṭra[7] and Yudhiṣṭhira[8] doing in the *Mahābhārata*[9] must have grown comparatively less. Instead, king's growing need to secure sacerdotal backing for the consolidation of his imperial pretensions[10] appears to have made him increasingly dependent on the *purohita*'s counsel not only in matters concerning his spiritual welfare but also about state affairs. This change may have been further facilitated by the fact that the priest was very often, the preceptor or *guru* of the king. It was quite natural therefore, for the latter to turn to his *guru* and *purohita* for advice in all matters, religious or temporal. So inordinate was the priest's influence, that Kauṭilya enjoins a king to follow his *purohita* as a pupil (does) his teacher, a son his father or a servant his master.[11] This was no mere assertion of a guiding principle. That it was actually practised is evident not only by the

[1] *Mahā-Ummagga Jat.*, VI, no. 546, p. 197.

[2] *Susima Jāt.*, II, no. 163, p. 33.

[3] *AS*, V. 3. 3.

[4] Ref. to *Purohita-kula* in *Bandhanamokkha Jāt.*, I, no. 120, p. 264.

[5] *AS*, I. 9. 9; *Maha-Ummagga Jāt.*, VI, no. 546.

[6] *Aṇḍabhūta Jāt.*, I, no. 62, p. 151; B.C. Law, *IDETBJ*, p. 156; G.S.P. Misra, *The Age of Vinaya*, p. 164.

[7] *Mbh.*, Sabhā Parva 51. 5, Dhṛtarāṣṭra said 'I am obedient to the counsel of my brother the illustrious Vidura, consulting with him I shall tell what should be done in this matter.'

[8] Ibid, "Yudhiṣṭhira, 'Living under the command of my relatives, I shall practise virtue'.

[9] *Mbh.*, Āryanyaka Parva, 149-45,'One should hold deliberations with the learned, get work done by competent persons and get policy formulated by friendly persons.'

[10] *Mbh.*, Śānti Parva, 79. 16.

[11] *AS*, I. 9. 10.

fact that in the *Dīgha Nikāya* king Renu addresses his *purohita* Govinda as his father[1] but also from the *Dighitikośala Jātaka*. The latter tells how king Brahmadatta, completely taken in by his priests deceitful advice, gave orders for a full dress army display to be held next morning.[2] Priests taking undue advantage of the royal confidence reposed in them as well as of their knowledge of occult sciences, are very often known to have duped kings into making munificent gifts to them. In the *Mahāsupīna Jātaka* we get reference to crafty priests who, by playing on the king's fear arising from a bad dream, coaxed him to offer a sacrifice, from which they hoped to reap rich gifts. This is sufficiently apparent from their exultant remark, "Large sums of money, and large supplies of food of every kind will be ours."[3]

2. Challenge from Rival Groups and Loss of Dignity in the post-Vedic Period

The dominant position of the brāhmaṇas, however, could not remain unchallenged for long. Besides a vast multitude of heterodox monks appearing on the scene as rivals, a number of other socio-economic circumstances also interposed to make the position of the brāhmaṇa donees extremely vulnerable.

The substitution of a semi-pastoral order by a full-fledged agrarian economy, accompanied by processes of urbanization and commercial enterprise, not only undermined the validity and authority of the *Vedas* and the knowledge contained therein but also discredited Vedic sacrificial cult, which had come to constitute the chief basis of the sacerdotal power of brāhmaṇas at this time.[4]

The commercialised aspect of emergent culture also contributed towards engendering a more rational outlook, specially in matters of religious belief. This further detracted from the efficacy of sacrificial ceremonialism which had long since lost its rationale and was now based purely on superstition-laden religious faith to which the city dwelling intelligentsia could hardly be expected to fully subscribe.

A passage from the *Bhuridatta Jātaka* reflects the spirit of growing scepticism towards sacrificial ritualism: "If he who kills is counted

[1] *Dīg-Nik.*, XIX, Mahā Govinda Suttanta, II, 243.

[2] *Dīghitikośala Jāt.*, III, no. 371.

[3] *Mahāsupina Jāt.*, I, no. 77, p. 187.

[4] *Bhuridatta Jāt.*, VI, no. 543, pp. 109-10.

innocent and if the victim safe to heaven is sent, let brāhmaṇas brāhmaṇa kill, so all were well".[1] This process of rationalization in matters of religious thought which had in fact been initiated in the later Vedic period by Upaniṣadic philosophers reached its logical climax in the Mauryan period when Aśoka put a ban on killing of animals. As B.N. Datta observes, "the prohibition of animal killing was another dialectical blow to sacerdotal ritualism.[2]

The rise of territorial states led to a drastic reduction in the number of tribal chiefs who had till then constituted the chief clientage of the brāhmaṇa priests. Decrease in the number of rich patrons combined with a marked growth in the numerical strength of brāhmaṇas directly affected the latter's interests as donees. The performance of big *soma* sacrifices, which had earlier been the chief occasion for gift-distribution, now became restricted only to great rulers, whose number was becoming exceedingly small.

By the beginning of sixth century B.C., brāhmaṇas as a class had also acquired a rigid *varṇa* character. Membership now being strictly restricted by birth, true intellectual merit could no longer be ensured in all members of that *varṇa* order. Since worthiness of a brāhmaṇa depended chiefly on his learning and intellectual acumen, the absence of these virtues now not only undermined the spontaneous respect he had inspired earlier but also detracted from his qualifications as donee.

Another factor which served to bring further discredit to the brāhmaṇas and made them appear less worthy as recipients of gifts was the opulent lifestyle adopted by them subsequent to the receipt of munificent gifts.[3] In the *Maccha Jātaka* a priest is described as coming to the riverside alongwith his attendant slaves.[4] Indulging in every possible luxury, the brāhmaṇas had thus come a long way off from the austere life, which their vocation had initially required them to lead. In the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the change evident in the life style of brāhmaṇas is well emphasised: "Did those ancient *Ṛṣis* whose verses you so chant and repeat, parade about well-groomed, perfumed, trimmed as to their hair and beard, adorned with garlands and gems".[5] The *Anguttara Nikāya* also states how in former times brāhmaṇas hoarded neither treasure, grain, silver nor gold; now they do these

[1]*Bhūridatta Jat.*, VI, no. 543, p. 110.
[2]B.N. Datta, *DHR*, p. 295.
[3]B.G. Gokhale, 'Brāhmaṇas in Early Buddhist Literature', *JIH*, XLVIII, p. 54.
[4]*Maccha Jāt.*, I, no. 34, p. 87.
[5]*Dīg. Nik.*, III, Ambattha Sutta, II.9.

things.[1] Similarly in the *Sutta Nipāta* it is mentioned how, 'No herds had brahmins then, no gold or pelf, their wealth was holy love and holy life.'[2]

Brāhmaṇas barring the *brahmacārin* and the wandering ascetics, generally led householder's life. They were therefore, entirely dependent on gifts not only for their own maintenance but also that of their families. The fact is significant for it partly accounts for the greed and cunning with which the brāhmaṇas came to be associated in the Pāli literature.[3] Thus one of the stories contained in the *Dhammapada* is about a brāhmaṇa who used to climb a certain *Kakudha* tree that grew close to the gate of the city of Vaiśāli, grasp a branch with his two feet, and swing himself from the branch, head downwards. Hanging thus he would cry out, "Give me a hundred *kapilas*, give me pennies, give me a slave woman. If you don't give me what I ask for, I will let myself drop from this tree and kill myself and make this city as though it had never been a city."[4] The brāhmaṇas earned further disrepute by their quarrelsome ways as well as by their haggling over the amount to be paid as sacrificial fees.[5] The Jaina text *Paumcariyam*, refers to two brāhmaṇas quarrelling with each other over gifts.[6] The lack of true learning and wisdom was sought to be made up for through the practice of occult sciences such as nacromancy, dream-reading, divining signs and omens etc. These further degraded the brāhmaṇas as donees in the popular esteem.[7]

A factor which seriously detracted from their religious dignity was the adoption of lesser civil occupations by a large majority of brāhmaṇas at this time. As S.C. Bhattacharya observes, "It was not possible for a whole *varṇa* to subsist economically on teaching, sacrificing and accepting of gifts. Naturally many brāhmaṇas were forced to take up other professions."[8] Thus the *Jātakas* make frequent references

[1]*Ang. Nik.*, V.20.191.
[2]*Sut. Nip.*, II.7.
[3]*Bhūridatta Jāt.*, VI, 543; *Sigāla Jāt.*, I, no. 113, p. 255; *Bhikkhā Parampara Jāt.*, IV, no. 496; *Kuṇala Jāt.*, V, no. 536.
[4]*Dh. Pada*, Bk. 26, story, II.
[5]*Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, 11.5.10.8.
[6]*Paumcariyam*, I. 55.36-37.
[7]*Mahasupina Jāt.*, I, no. 77; *Siri. Jāt.*, II, no. 287, p. 279; *Mahā-Ummagga Jāt.*, VI, no. 546; *Asilakkhana Jāt.*, I, no. 126. *Takka-Jāt.*, I, no. 63; *Vedabbha-Jāt.*, I, no. 48, *Theragāthā*, Canto II, pt. IV, 151; *Dh. Pada*, Bk. 26, story 37.
[8]S.C. Bhattacharya, *Some Aspects of Indian Society*, p. 48.

to brāhmaṇa cultivators, husbandmen, carpenters, doctors[1] etc. We get notice of brāhmaṇas working even as field labour.[2] Even though acceptance of gifts or *pratigrah* was recognised by the lawgivers as one of the chief duties of all brāhmaṇas, irrespective of their true calling[3] yet they actually fell short of the high qualifications which had initially entitled them to the receipt of gifts.

The prestige of brāhmaṇas as donees also suffered greatly due to adverse comparison that began to be made with their rival contenders to people's charity and respect viz. members of heterodox sects. The life of total abstinence devoid of all hankering after material wealth made the latter much more respected in society. They were naturally considered worthier recipients of gifts. In fact, as the early Buddhist and Jaina canonical texts would show, members of both religious orders initially at least steered clear from all those behavioural faults which had lowered the esteem of the brāhmaṇas in the eyes of society. According to the *Vinaya* dictates contained in the *Cullavagga*, *bhikkhus* were not to learn to teach the low arts of divination, spells, omens, astrology, witchcraft and quackery.[4] Even monastic rules pertaining to gift-articles which could be received and the method of alms-seeking were so rigorously framed and enforced as to protect and ensure the austere and frugal life style and religious dignity of the monks. Brāhmaṇas by contrast appear to have erred on the side of lax moral standard and self-indulgence. Since gifts made to both brāhmaṇas and heterodox monks were made more out of religious faith than charity, retention of donor's respect by the donee was absolutely necessary. But during the centuries following the age of the Buddha, brāhmaṇas apparently failed to win respect due to lapses in both their intellectual and moral bearing.

3. Attempt to restore Religious Dignity of Brāhmaṇas as Donees

As borne out by our sources which are mainly Buddhist texts,[5]

[1]*Kāma-Jāt.*, IV, no. 467, ref. to brāhmaṇa cultivator; *Phandana Jāt.*, IV, no. 475, ref. to carpenter; *Mahākaptī Jāt.*, VI, no. 516, ref. to husbandman; *Bhūri-datta Jāt.*, VI, no. 543, ref. to doctor; *Dasa Brāhmaṇa Jāt.*, IV, no. 495, ref. to brāhmaṇas taking to different callings; *Theragātha*, Canto XVI, CCLX, ref. to cowherd.

[2]*Manu.*, IV.2.3.

[3]*Uraga Jāt*; III, no. 354.

[4]*CV*, V.17.45

[5]Due allowance has to be made for their natural bias and proneness to exaggerate.

brāhmaṇas during the post-Vedic period appear to have lost their predominant position as donees. They also became objects of derision and censure. But though the general esteem in which they were held had ebbed very low, extreme heterogeneous character of the brāhmaṇa *varṇa* at this time still proved to be its saving grace. For if there are numerous references to extremely poor brāhmaṇas[1] there are frequent allusions to wealthy ones too.[2] Similarly want of true learning in majority of them appears to have been adequately balanced by the really learned amongst them.[3] They managed to keep alive the myth about brāhmaṇas' professed knowledge. Gluttony and crooked disposition of some crafty priests[4] was in the same way more than covered up by those members of the *varṇa* who living a truly saintly life, inspired spontaneous faith and respect amongst the people.[5]

Marked decline in the degree of popularity which brāhmaṇas enjoyed[6] and very stiff competition offered by members of heterodox sects as donees[7] appear to have led the brahmanical lawmakers to reassess their position vis-a-vis that of other members of the society. They were compelled to take recourse to various measures for its improvement. The *Dharmaśāstra* rules which deal specially with the conduct of brāhmaṇas seem to have been framed primarily to meet this objective.

Various injunctions made in the *Dharamasūtras* and early *Smṛtī* texts, bear out how great emphasis now began to be laid on high moral character[8] and Vedic learning to entitle a brāhmaṇa to be a

[1]*Dh. Pada.*, Bk. I, story 15; Bk. IX, story 1; *Pancatantra*, Bk. V. 32; '*brahmanaḥ sahajadaridra samtraptah*'; *Junha Jāt.*, IV, no. 456; *Bilāri-Kosiya Jāt*, IV, no. 450.

[2]*Sut. Nip.*, II. 7; III. 9, ref. to distinguished and wealthy brāhmaṇas such as Kamkin, Tarukkha, Pokkharasati Janussoni, Todeyya.

[3]*Maj. Nik.*, XCII. Sela Sutta; *Tittira Jāt.*, III, no. 438.

[4]*Ang. Nik.*, Bk. V. XX.III, p. 163 'after cramming their bellies to the utmost they take away the remainder.' *Dīg. Nik.*, I, Brahma Jāla Sūtta, 20, ref. to trickester brāhmaṇa,

[5]*Sut. Nip*, Bk. V.I.1.; *Mahā-Ummagga Jāt.*, VI, no. 546, 'ref. righteous mendicant brāhmaṇas'.

[6]*Dīg. Nik*, III, Ambattha Sutta. 1. 11. 'They i.e. Śākyas, neither venerate, nor value, nor esteem, nor give gifts to, nor pay honour to the brāhmaṇas.

[7]*Bāveru Jāt.*, III, no. 339 'But when the sweet-voiced Buddha preached the law, from heretics their gifts and praise all men withdrew.'

[8]*Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, I.8.23.5; *Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, II.10.18.1-2; II.3.5.12; *Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, VI.30; X.30; *Sank. Gr. Sūt.*, I.2.2.

worthy recipient of dāna.[1] A brāhmaṇa devoid of these virtues was no more deemed fit to be called a brāhmaṇa. For example, according to Baudhāyana offence of neglecting a brāhmaṇa cannot be deemed to have been committed against one who is unacquainted with the Veda.[2] Elsewhere it is stated that as an elephant made of wood, as an antelope made of leather such is an unlearned brāhmaṇa; those three having nothing but the name (of their kind).[3] Even the degree of merit arising from a gift made to brāhmaṇas would vary according to the Vedic learning and moral virtue possessed by the latter.[4]

These rules are significant for not only do they distinguish a learned (*śrotriya* or *Vedapāraga*) brāhmaṇa from a non-learned, but also reveal the important change that was taking over the concept of the donee's qualifications. Clearly now it was not the economic need which determined the worthiness of a donee, but his qualifications with regard to his possession of moral virtues, high learning and also his religious and *varṇa* status. In the *Mahābhārata* it is stated that "Just as fire covered with wet wood does not glow so also is a receiver of gifts, devoid of penance, Vedic study and good conduct."[5] At another place it is said that gifts should not be made to one who is wicked, born to a bad family, nor to one who is not refined by vows.[6]

In actual practice too, the brāhmaṇa's earning from gift appear to have largely depended on his reputation for learning. Thus according to the Sonadaṇḍa Sutta of the *Dīgha Nikāya* brahmaṇa Sonadaṇḍa expresses his fear that if he is not able to satisfy by his explanations the questions put by the *samaṇa* Gotama, his reputation for learning might suffer and with it his earnings would also grow less. "What we enjoy, depends upon our reputation."[7] The concept of an ideal brāhmaṇa, that is one who is known mainly by his wisdom and learning in contrast to his non-learned counterpart who deserves to be treated as a mere *śūdra*,[8] is also echoed by the Buddha in the *Dhammapada*.[9]

[1] *Vaś. Dh. Sūt.*, III.8; III.9; VI.26; *Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, VIII.4.5. *Sankh. Gr. Sūt.*, I.2.6.; IV.1.2.; *Mbh.*, Sānti Parva, 140.35, *Mbh.*, II.131-33; 142-43; 168.
[2] *Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, I.5.10.28.
[3] ibid., I. 1. 1. 11; *Manu*, II.158.
[4] *Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, V. 20.
[5] *Mbh.*, Śānti Parva, 37.34.
[6] Ibid., 37. 31.
[7] *Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, V.20.
[8] *Mbh.*, Śānti Parva 37.34.
[9] Ibid., 37. 31.

Śrotriya brāhmaṇas allowed special privileges: Emphasis on Vedic-learning as a primary qualification of a brāhmaṇa donee is reiterated through special privileges being allowed exclusively to the *śrotriyas* by the lawgivers. Thus according to Gautama, it is the special duty of a king to support and protect in every way *śrotriya* brāhmaṇas,[1] learned in the Veda. The kingdom of that king in whose dominions a *śrotriya* pines with hunger will be afflicted by famine.[2] Manu, in fact, goes to the extent of stipulating that though dying with want, a king must not levy a tax on *śrotriyas*.[3] The*Mahābhārata* on the other hand affirms that non-*śrotriyas* were not only required to pay taxes but also were made to perform forced labour.[4] Similarly Baudhāyana too enjoins all householders to give presents of money according to their means "to good brāhmaṇas, *śrotriyas* and *Vedapāragas*; when they are distressed for a livelihood, or desirous to offer a sacrifice, or engaged in studying or on a journey, or have performed a *Viśvajit* sacrifice."[5] That special privileges allowed exclusively to *śrotriya* brāhmaṇas received state validation is affirmed by the *Arthaśāstra*.[6]

In order to further augment the prestige of brāhmaṇas, rules enjoining non-accumulation of wealth as well as non-performance of sacrifice by the *śrotriyas* for women and śūdras appear to have been laid down by the *Smṛtikāras*.[7] In fact, to live by collecting fallen ears of corn was deemed far better for a *śrotriya* than the act of receiving gifts.[8] Practice of occult sciences for extracting alms was also forbidden to brāhmaṇas, perhaps for the same reason. As stated by Manu, "neither by explaining prodigies and omens nor by skill in astrology and palmistry nor by giving advice and by exposition of the *śāstras*, let him ever seek to obtain alms."[9] Another dictate of Manu excludes those brāhmaṇas from receiving gifts who follow tainting occupations such as cow-keeping, trading, artisanship, domestic service and money-lending.[10] This would further suggest the attempt on the part of law-

[1] *Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, X. 9.
[2] *Manu.*, VII. 134.
[3] Ibid., VII. 133.
[4] *Mbh.*, Śānti Parva, 76. 5.
[5] *Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, II. 3. 5. 19.
[6] Kangle, *The Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra*, pt. III, p. 144.
[7] *Manu*, IV. 7. 8.; *Yaj. Smr.* I. 128. Even Gautama, XX. 1, states, 'Let him cast off a father who assassinates a king or who sacrifices for śudras.'
[8] *Manu*, IV. 186-187.
[9] Ibid., VI. 50.
[10] Ibid., VIII. 102.

givers to restore religious dignity and popularity of the brāhmaṇas as donees.

Although the *Dharmaśāstras* clearly aimed at reclaiming the image of ideal brāhmaṇa, which had suffered greatly in comparison with that of heterodox monks, yet they also purposed to protect the interest of brāhmaṇa *varṇa* as a whole. Thus next to Vedic learning and virtuous conduct, it was birth in the highest *varṇa* order and ritualistic purity which were rated by the lawgivers as the chief factors determining the worthiness of a donee. The injunction made by Vaśiṣṭha concerning this is quite clear: "Some became worthy receptacles of gifts through sacred learning and some through practice of austerities. But that brāhmaṇa whose stomach does not contain the food of a śūdra, is even the worthiest receptacle of all."[1] The lawgivers, in fact, leave us in no doubt as to who is a worthy recipient of dāna. The guidelines are very clear, i.e. although learned and virtuous brāhmaṇas were to be preferred, yet all brāhmaṇas by virtue of their birth in that particular *varṇa* order became naturally qualified as donees.

Perhaps to meet with the exigency[2] created by stiff competition offered by members of heterodox sects, the lawgivers tried to organise brāhmaṇa priesthood into a well-knit body governed by a uniform code of conduct.[3] Such an impression would be confirmed by those *Dharmaśāstra* rules which specify the exact sacrificial fee to be received by the priest or forbid him to accept a post which has either been rejected or is served by another.[4] That there existed a body of centralised priesthood is also proved by a story contained in the *Mahābhārata*. The story narrates how king Lomapada had been guilty of a falsehood towards a brāhmaṇa and was therefore shunned by all persons of the priestly class. He was thus left without a ministering priest to assist him in his religious rites.[5] Such concerted action on the part of brāhmaṇas could have resulted only from some sort of a centra-

[1] *Vaś. Dh. Sūt.*, VI. 26.

[2] R.N. Nandi, 'Some Social Aspects of the *Gṛhyasūtras*' *Pro. IHC*, 1977, p. 168. 'The developmental character of the *gṛhya* rituals seems to represent a crisis for the surplus-sharing priestly class, and also attempts to get over it.'

[3] R.N. Sharma, *Brahmins*, p. 106.

[4] *Aśva. Gr. Sūt.*, I. 23. 20, 'The functions of an officiating priest are not to be exercised if abandoned (by another priest) or at an *āhina* sacrifice with small sacrificial fee.'

[5] *Mbh.*, Āraṇyaka Parva, 110.20.

lized control exercised by an organised priesthood. In fact, it may bear some comparison with current practice amongst today's Gayawal priests[1] who have been allocated region or *riyāsata* from where alone they are entitled to receive pilgrims. It is, however, not easy to say in the absence of any definite evidence how far these *Dharmaśāstra* rules were signs of an earnest effort by the lawgivers to reorganise themselves in order to strengthen their claim to gifts as well as to keep up with the organised form and character of rival heterodox orders.

Re-casting of sacrificial ideology: The growing disfavour shown towards animal slaughter, especially for sacrificial purposes had further eliminated an important source of gift for the brāhmaṇas. It had also largely accounted for the popularity gained by heterodox sects in the post-Vedic period. In order to safeguard their erstwhile position and popularity as donees, it became imperative for the brahmanical leaders to adopt a different stance with regard to sacrificial ritualism[2]

According to the new concept of sacrifice expounded by the lawgivers, sacrifice was supposed to lie more in charity, truth and penance[3] than in animal killing, which was severely denounced. Thus Manu unequivocally proclaims: "But if no (sacred) fire (is available) he shall place (the offerings) into the hands of a brāhmaṇa; for brāhmaṇas who know the sacred texts declare: 'What fire is, even such is a brāhmaṇa."[4] Similarly Vaśiṣṭha unreservedly maintains: "But the offering made through the mouth of a brāhmaṇa which neither spilt nor causes pain (to sentient creatures), nor assails him (who makes it) is far more excellent than an *Agnihotra*."[5] In fact, as shown by K.V.R. Aiyangar, out of twenty-one perodical sacrifices prescribed in the *Dharmaśāstras*, it was just one category comprising seven *soma* sacrifices for which animal victim was required. The rest, namely seven *havir yajñas* and the seven *pākyajñas*, did not need an

[1] L.P. Vidyarthi, *The Sacred Complex of Hindu Gaya*, p. 93.

[2] R.N. Nandi, op. cit., p. 168. 'The older sacrificial cult which gave support to a host of priests for long period of time was now beyond the competence of householder clients. The *śresṭhi* and *gṛhrapati* of the Pāli Buddhist literature, who could nevertheless be encouraged to perform the numerous domestic rituals, which were far less complicated and less costly too.'

[3] *Mbh.* Anuśāsana Parva, 110. II.

[4] *Manu*. III. 212; *Yaj. Smr.*, I. 315.

[5] *Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, XXX. 7; XXX. 2-5.

animal victim.[1]

The concept of sacrifice becoming more and more associated with offerings of cooked food instead of animal killing is a development well attested by the contemporary brahmanical texts. Thus according to *Sānkhāyana Gṛhyasūtra*, "having established the sacred fire and having prepared a mass of cooked food, he shall sacrifice with the formulas to "Viṣṇu *svāhā*.'"[2] In the *Khadira Gṛhyasūtra* it is stated that one who desired that his stock of cattle may increase should sacrifice rice and barley.[3] Not only was dāna now treated at par with sacrifices as far as the resultant religious merit was concerned[4] but also far too many occasions were suggested when sacrifices involving offerings of cooked and uncooked food had to be performed. According to the *Khadira Gṛhyasūtra* when his cows are sick let him sacrifice milk-rice in the cow stable.[5] Similarly when the child is appearing a sacrifice for the woman in labour is to be performed.[6] As prescribed in the *Sānkhayana Gṛhyasūtra*, sacrifices may be performed when going to cross water in order to ensure lucky progress[7] or on the occasion of consecration of ponds, wells, tanks and gardens.[8] In the *Gobhila Gṛhyasūtra*[9] similar sacrificial offerings are recommended even when a span of roof or a middle post of house breaks or if a debt turns up which he is unable to pay.

That Vedic sacrifice entailing mass cattle decimation could no longer be relevant in the post-Vedic economic order, seems to be acknowledged in the *Mahābhārata*,[10] as well as in other contemporary

[1]K.V.R. Aiyangar, *Aspects of the Social and Political System of Manusmṛti*, p. 114.

[2]*Sankh. Gr. Sūt.*, V. 3. 1. 3.

[3]*Khad. Gr. Sūt.*, IV. 1. 10.

[4]Ibid., III. 3. 13.

[5]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 61. 18.

[6]Ibid., II. 2. 28.

[7]*Sankh. Gr. Sūt.*, IV. 14. 1. 2.

[8]Ibid., V. 2. 1., V. 3. 1. 3. [9]*Gobh., Gr. Sūt.*, III.3.31.

[10]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 65. 38-42, Āśvamedhika Parva, 38. 92. O Puranadhara, animals have not been ordained to be slaughtered in sacrifices. O Puissant One, these preparations of thine are destructive of merit. This sacrifice is not consistent with righteousness, the destruction of creatures can never be said to be an act of righteousness; V.V. Dixit,"Relation of Epics to Brāhmaṇa Literature," *PO*, 1941. "The ethical portions of *Mahābhārata* soundly denounce those who erect sacrificial pillars and eat flesh . . . use of a corn victim is recommended instead of the living one. Non-killing is greater than any other religious rite, it is the highest religion. Real sacrifice consists in charity, truth and penance

brahmanical texts. As pointed out by D.D. Kosambi, the traditional five great Vedic animal sacrifices had now degenerated into symbolic offerings.[1] The fact of the gradual rejection of animal sacrifices is attested not only by the mushroom growth of protestant heterodox faiths, vociferously decrying animal slaughter and upholding the principle of charity or dāna[2] but also by the fact that the Sanskrit term *yajña* had by this time come to acquire a twofold meaning in Pāli, namely (i) a brahmanical sacrifice; and (ii) almsgiving.[3] Regarding the relative efficacy of sacrifice and gifts perhaps Manu's dictum is final. "Whereas sacrifice was the chief virtue in the Dvāpara age, dāna is to be regarded supreme in the Kali age."[4] The latter verse, in fact, furnishes the best commentary on the gradual replacement of ostentatious sacrificial ritualism by the more pragmatic institution of dāna, for it clearly reveals attempts at psycho-religious adjustments with the new social and economic exigencies.

Enlarging opportunities for ritual giftmaking: Some of the occasions on which sacrificial offerings and dāna were recommended would suggest exploitation of folk-belief and superstitious fears by the law-givers for the purpose of popularising the practice of making gifts to brāhmaṇas as well as for creating more avenues for the latter to exact dāna.

Fresh occasions for dāna were now sought to be created through indoctrination and inculcation of superstitious beliefs and fears. Thus as Gautama stipulates: "He (the king) shall also, take heed of that which astrologers and interpreters of omens tell (him)"[5] The performance of sacramental rites now not only became obligatory for all householders, but were considered complete only when accompanied by gifts to brāhmaṇas. Our sources are full of references to such giftmaking specially on the occasions of birth,[6] naming ceremony,[7]

[1]D.D. Kosambi, *An Intro*, p. 259; *Manu*, III. 67-71.

[2]*Mahāvastu*, tr. J.J. Jones, II, p. 97. 'Following Prince Sudhanū's instructions, the King offered an unobjectionable blameless sacrifice. Several thousand recluses, brāhmaṇas, beggars and wayfarers were given food and drink and clothes with garments.'

[3]P.R. Barua, 'The Brahmana Doctrine of Sacrifice and Rituals in Pāli Canon,' *JASP*, I, p. 94.

[4]*Manu*., I. 86.

[5]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt*.. XI. 15.

[6]*Āpas. Gr. Sūt* . VI. 16. 1.; *Asātarūpa Jāt.*, I, no. 100, p. 242.

[7]*Pañcāvudha Jāt.*, I, no. 55, p. 137.

upanayana,[1] marriage[2] and funeral rites.[3] But besides *saṁskāras*,[4] numerous other rites were also prescribed which occasioned gifts to the brāhmaṇas. Thus as enjoined in the *Sankhāyana Gṛhyasūtra* "let him give something to the brahmins for a *sthālipāka* and for other rites".[5] The earlier *yajña* religiousity which was beyond the competence of the average urban householder gave way to the more regular and mandatory *Saṁskāras* of which as many as forty are enumerated in the *Gṛhyasūtras*. The *saṁskāras* which almost replaced the older *yajña* rituals, not only improved the prospects of gift-exchange in large towns and prosperous neighbouring villages but even helped the marginal integration of both the *jajmāni* and non-*jajmāni* brāhmaṇas to an impersonal market economy of towns.

Similarly gifts to brāhmaṇas were also recommended on the occasions of lunar and solar eclipses. According to the *Rāmāyaṇa* full moon days of the months of *Aṣaḍha, Kārtika, Māgha* and *Baiśākha*, were to be regarded as days of compulsory alms giving.[6] Interestingly, the full moon days of months of *Aṣāḍha Śrāvaṇa, Bhadra, Aśvin* and *Māgha* are considered sacred by members of the Chakma tribe.[7]

The following stipulation contained in the *Arthaśāstra* perhaps reveals the extent to which folk-belief and rites were inducted into Brahmanism to heighten its popular aspect: "And on *parvaṇ* days he should offer worship of *caitya*-trees with offerings of raised platforms, umbrellas, food, small flags and goats."[8] The growing popularity of the concept of holy places of pilgrimage or *tīrtha* was further utilised by the lawgivers to suggest other occasions for making gifts to brāhmaṇas. As stated by *Vaśiṣṭha:* "The manes consider him to be their (true) descendant who offers to them food at Gaya."[9]

Acceptance of gifts from lower varṇas: A certain amount of relaxation

[1]*Āpas. Gṛ. Sūt.*, VI. 18. 4.
[2]*Pāras. Gṛ. Sūt.*, I. 8. 14-18.
[3]*Mbh.*, Āśvamedhika Parva, 14; *Rāmā.*, Ayodhyā Kaṇda, 75. 4.
[4]R.N. Nandi, 'Client Ritual and Conflict in Early Brahmanical Order' *IHR*, V, no. 1-2, p. 92.
[5]*Sank. Gr. Sūt.*, I. 14. 11.
[6]*Rāmā.*, Uttarakaṇda, 94. 10. 16; also *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva 129, tr. vol. XI p. 269 'On the day of the full moon every month one should make gifts to brāhmaṇas,'
[7]P.C. Basu, 'Social and Religious Ceremonies of the Chakmas,' *JASB*, NS, XXVII.
[8]*AŚ*, IV, 3. 41.
[9]*Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, XI, 42.

which is evident in rules pertaining to acceptance of gifts by brāhmaṇas from members of lower *varṇa* orders, appears to have been effected by the lawgivers, perhaps to achieve the same end, viz. to safeguard their interests as donees. Through the enunciation of *āpaddharma* or code of conduct to be observed only in dire circumstances, brāhmaṇas were now allowed to accept gifts from any one[1] even from the śūdras. The latter's economic status seems to have improved considerably during the post-Mauryan period since references to wealthy śūdras are frequently available in the contemporary literature. According to the *Gautama Dharmasūtra:* "If the means for sustaining life cannot (be procured) otherwise. they may be accepted from a śūdra",[2] while the *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* allows that money for the teacher may be taken from a śūdra.[3] In the *Mahābhārata*, sūdras possessed of great wealth are, in fact, threatened with dire consequences in case they are not generous to the brāhmaṇas.[4] As suggested by R.N. Sharma, from the several references occurring in the *Śrauta Sūtras* it may safely be inferred that śūdras were allowed to perform sacrifices.[5]

Our sources thus make it amply clear that though the dominance of the brāhmaṇas as gift recipients suffered for a while due to the rise of rival religious sects and inherent changes taking place both in the contemporary economic order and within their own *varṇa*—but the damage was by no means irrepairable. By resorting to a number of opportune measures they were able to soon reclaim their position as the most dominant category of donees.

Heterodox Renouncers

Heterodox religious orders and their members appear as a new category of donees in the sixth century B.C. Their emergence was the

[1]*Manu*, X. 102. 'A brāhmaṇa who has fallen into distress may accept gifts from anybody, for according to the law it is not possible to assert that anything pure may be sullied.' *Manu*. X. 104, 'He who, when in danger of losing his life, accepts food from any person whatsoever, is no more tainted by sin than the sky by mind'. *Manu*. X. 107; Bhāradvāja, a performer of great austerities accepted many cows from the carpenter *Bribhu*, when he was starving together with his sons in a lonely forest'.
[2]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, XVII. 5.
[3]*Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, I. 2. 7. 21.
[4]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 118.18.
[5]R.N. Sharma, *Culture and Civilization as Revealed in the Śrautā Sūtras*, p. 55.

direct outcome of intense religio-intellectual activity perceptible at this time owing to economic change which eventually led to the rise of a large number of heterodox sects. Six amongst these, besides Buddhism, appear to have gained special prominence and popularity since their leaders and philosophical tenets find specific reference in the Pāli texts.[1] Distinguished by certain common features, leaders of most of these sects prescribed mendicant's way of life for their active adherents, thereby making them subsist totally on alms[2]. In fact, the appellation *bhikkhu*, derived from the word *bhikkhā* (i e. alms) used for active members of all heterodox sects is significant. It underlines the mode of their seeking livelihood, more than their aspiration and method of endeavouring for spiritual upliftment. It is worth noting how the contemporary sources, chiefly the Pāli texts, tend to create an impression not only of wide and instant popularity enjoyed by this newly arisen donee group but also of their very large numbers.

Size of this donee group is difficult to ascertain on account of the naturally biased picture drawn in heterodox texts and absence of any definite statistical data on the subject. But it seems that the impression regarding their being numerically a larger group than other categories of donees may be due to their being a better organised body of alms-seekers. In contrast to ascetics and mendicants of Vedic times who mostly led an isolated existence,[3] the heterodox monks and nuns, being governed by strict monastic discipline, not only wore special kind of robes (*cīvara*) prescribed for them[4] but also moved about in groups.[5] The specially prescribed robes invested them with a distinct

[1]*Saṁ. Nik.*, III. X. 1; *Sut-N.p.*, II. Kulavagga, 6. Sabhiyutta; *Maj. Nik.*, LXXVII. Mahā Sakuludayi Sutta, II. 2-3. 'There was Pūraṇa Kassapa, Mākkhali Goṣāla, Ajita Keśākambali, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Saṁjaya Belatthiputta and Nāṭaputta the Nigantha.'

[2]According to the *Mahāvagga*, I. 22, Buddhist monks were expected to subsist only on the food they could obtain by begging, *piṇḍiyālopabhojanam*. Buddhaghosa commenting on a passage of the *Visudhi-magga*, I. 85-88, observes; 'while begging his food or taking his medicine or using his clothes or bedding, the mendicant should reflect from day to day and form time to time that he depends upon others for these things', vide P.V. Bapat, *Vimmuttimagga and Viśhudhimagga—A Comparative Study*, p. 13.

[3]R. Thapar, *AISH*, pp. 64-65.

[4]V S. Agrawala, *India as Known to Pāṇini*, p. 386.

[5]*Dig. Nik.*, I Brahma Jāla sutta, 1. 1. *Dh. Padu*, Bk. 18, story 10; *Moj. Nik*,. XLI. Saleyyad Sutta, I. 285, ibid., LXXXI. Ghaṭikāra Sutta, II. 44.

identity thus making their presence easily known. Similarly their moving about in bands deepened the impression regarding their being in large numbers. Brāhmaṇa donees barring the orangelsclad wandering ascetics, on the contrary, are neither known to have worn any special dress nor moved about in organised groups to be easily distinguishable. Moreover, their leading householder's life seems to have so completely blended them into the social scheme that their presence could not be so easily marked out.

But although it is difficult to assess the comparative numerical strength of heterodox donees and their brāhmaṇa counterparts, still their presence in considerable numbers would suggest the availability of large social surplus in post-Vedic times, and the heavy strain put upon it by this new class of donees. The wide popularity which the latter continued to enjoy throughout the period under study would in fact bespeak a rather indulgent society; a society which was not too averse to shouldering the additional burden out of the existing surplus. Significantly monastic establishments during our period are mostly found to be located near urban centres and in rich agricultural regions where surplus was available to support coenobitical community.[1] The fact clearly shows that it was really the economic surplus made available through iron-based agrarian economy and the matching mercantile and administrative apparatus required for it,[2] which enabled this new class of donees to emerge and pursue mendicancy.

Still we do come across occasional expression of disapproval of their parasitical mode of life. From the *Cullavagga* we learn how people were annoyed and indignant and murmured: "How can the Śākya-Puttiya *samaṇas*, when food is being given to them, take it so carelessly. Each single ball of rice is the result of hundredfold labour."[3] Similarly in the *Manikantha Jātaka* we are told how everybody was annoyed at this begging and solicitation; so much annoyed were they that at the sight of these brethern they started and were scared away.[4] According to a passage of *Sūtrakṛtānga*, a monk is thus reproved by a householder: "Those who become *śramaṇas* are the meanest workmen; men unable to support (their family), low caste men, wretches, idlers."[5] The paradox apparent between their parasitical

[1]R. Thapar, *AISH*, p. 12.

[2]A. Gosh, *CEHI*, p. 20.

[3]*CV*, V. 26. 1.

[4]*Manikantha Jāt.*, II, no. 253; Itivuthaka, III. V. I.

[5]*Sūtrakrtānga*, Bk. 2. Lec. 2. *SBE*, vol. XLV, pt. II.

mode of life and the extensive popularity they enjoyed as donees is the subject of caustic comment in one of the Buddhist texts: "I ask, why are recluses dear to thee? Not fain to work are they, the lazy crew. They make their living off what others give."[1]

A careful analysis of the social base and antecedents of the active and lay members of the heterodox orders may help us to account for the swift and wide popularity gained by the latter. Although opinions differ regarding the patronage received by Buddhism,[2] the available data makes it fairly certain that it was the affluent mercantile and industrial classes[3] which all along proved to be the backbone of the heterodox religious movement. But if the laity belonged mostly to the trading community, the monks themselves were drawn largely from the lower social ranks.[4] The reason for it is not far to seek. In a *varṇa* stratified society, the life of a heterodox recluse, who while manifesting rare religious dignity was yet above all caste considerations, naturally must have appealed more to members of the lower social order especially merchants and traders who despite their affluence were still denied high ritual status, than to those who already enjoyed a high and respectable position in society.

But very often, as is amply borne out by our sources, it was simply the attraction of easy living and comparative security held out by monastic life, which drew the economically and socially inferior to its fold.[5] Thus in the Jaina text *Sūtrakṛtānga,* we get a reference to a miserable man who becomes a monk in order to get food from others.[6] In the *Majjhima Nikāya* persons, who not for their beliefs but for a livelihood and without believing go forth from home to homelessness as pilgrims, are held up in scorn and have been described as cunning and deceitful tricksters".[7]

The fact that the active members of the *Saṁgha* and the lay followers were mainly drawn from city population is also significant for it clearly highlights the feeling of general discontent evident more

[1] *Therigāthā*, Rohini, LXVII.

[2] D.P. Chattopadhyaya, 'Some Problems of Early Buddhism', *Buddhism: The Marxist Approach*, p. 9.

[3] Supra, Chapter III, p. 59.

[4] *Maj-Nik.*, V. Ananganasuttạ, I. 32; ibid., LXXXI. Ghatikāra Sutta, II.51; VI. 37. 1; VII, 1.40.

[5] *Theragatha*, Canto I, pt. V, XLII; pt. IX-LXXXIV; *MV*, I. 30. 1; I. 62. 1.

[6] *Sūtrakṛtānga*, Bk. I, Lec. 7, *SBE*, XLV, pt. II.

[7] *Maj. Nik*, I. 32.

amongst the city-dwellers than in the village folks. The life of moral righteousness, which the heterodox doctrines sought to inculcate, must have naturally held greater fascination for the city-dwellers living in an atmosphere of gross neglect and social inequality than for those who lived in the pastoral and agricultural milieu of the villages. In the gradually expanding urban milieu of post-Veane times it was natural therefore for the members of heterodox orders to enjoy greater popularity as donees than their brāhmaṇa counterparts.

Tribal ideal projected by the Saṁgha: The adoption of monastic system may also to a large extent account for the greater popularity won by this new category of donees. Since the monastic order, especially that of the Buddhists, was fashioned on lines of tribal republics it naturally must have echoed that nostalgic yearning felt by the people for the tribal order, which had long since been replaced by a fast developing agrarian economy. In fact the tensions bred by quick adjustments to an increasingly commercialised urban mode of life, the accompanying strife[1] and lowering of moral values[2] seem to have heightened this feeling of wistfulness for the tribal ideal. Attempts to resurrect it or even seek to live under an illusion of it would have been quite natural. The secret of the Buddha's success as a religious leader, therefore, lay not so much in providing a philosophical remedy to overcome misery, but in giving succour to the emotional needs of the people by reverting to the seemingly perfect tribal ideology within the *saṁgha*.[3] By offering an alternate way of life which emphasised communal living through equal distribution[4] and negation of *varna* distinctions, the Buddha could evoke an immediate response

[1] Ibid., LXXXIX. Dhammacetiya Sutta, II. 121. 'Moreover there is always strife going on between kings . . . between brahmins, between householders, between father and son . . . between brother and brother . . . between brother and sister.'

[2] Ibid., XXVII. Cula Hatthi Padopama Sutta, I. 180.

[3] D.P. Chattopadhyaya, *Lokāyata*, p. 468; *Buddhism: The Marxist Approach*, p. 33.

[4] *CV*, XI. I. 14: "Then king Udena thought : "These Śākya-Puttiya *samaṇas* make general use of everything in a conscientious way and take nothing as one man's peculiar property." *MV*, VI. 5. 9. " . . . and whetever he received, he distributed among his attendant (*bhikkhus*); *Maj. Nik.*, CIV-*Samagama Sutta*, II. 251. "whatever an almsman receives that is lawful and lawfully received this even to the last crumb in his bowl, he shares equally and without favour among all his virtuous fellows in the higher life."

from the people, labouring under stress and strain of a transitional society. The fact that he received a bigger welcome in regions with a monarchic set-up as compared to republican states under an already existing tribal order may bear out the correctness of such an inference.

The popularity of heterodox alms-seekers was to a large extent also due to failure on the part of brahmanical leaders to meet the challenge posed by the changing economic order. They did not promptly effect necessary re-adjustments in their religious doctrines and rituals. The heterodox leaders in fact seem to have capitalised this significant lapse on the part of Brahmanism by offering not only a substitute religious philosophy but also an alternate way of life, which served as an effective stop-gap till Brahmanism succeeded in bringing about the required change.[1]

Their modest demands: Despite their total dependence on alms,[2] the needs of heterodox monks, through strict monastic discipline, were kept so few and modest that they could be easily met by the lay-folks without feeling any undue strain on their capacity to make gifts. The *Dīgha Nikāya* clearly lays down that monks must abstain from accepting gold, silver, uncooked grain, raw-meat, women or girls, bondmen or bondwomen, sheep or goats, fowls or swine, elephants, cattle, horses, mares, cultivated fields or wastes.[3] Brāhmaṇa donees, on the contrary, appear to have made such heavy demands on the donor's resources by asking for opulent gifts such as land, cattle, slaves. precious metals etc.,[4] that besides causing obvious difficulties and occasional embarrassment to the latter, they must have forfeited considerable credibility as a class of donees.

Alms begging rules based on pragmatic considerations: The alms-begging rules framed specially to suit the convenience of lay patrons may

[1]D.D. Kosambi, *An Intro.*, p. 169. 'The monks successfully contested brāhmin pretensions to innate superiority. It must be remembered that brāhmin ritual then served only the kings, nobles, chief or richest traders, but had very little use for the common man, in contrast to the later fully developed brāhmin priesthood which performed even the most trifling ritual to anybody, for inconsiderable payment.'

[2]R.F. Gombrich, ed., *The Perfect Generosity of King Vessantara*, p. XX; Madan Mohan Singh, 'The Early Jaina Monastic life,' *IHQ*, XXXVI, 'Life in the Buddhist Monastery during the 6th cent. B.C., *JBRS*, 1954.

[3]*Dīg-Nik.*, I. Brahma-Jālasutta, 10.

[4]*Dūta Jāt.*, II. no. 260; *Brahmadatta Jāt.* III, no. 323; *Rāmā.*, Ayodhyā Kaṇḍa, chap 77; Bāla Kaṇda, chap. 14.

have also indirectly added to the popularity of heterodox category of donees. Thus we learn that the Buddha not only prescribed thanks-giving rules to win the respect and approval of the donors but also gave strict instructions that unless specially invited not more than three monks were to enjoy alms together at a donor's house.[1] He also allowed monks to wear ordinary robes mainly because such clothings could be easily spared by the common people.[2] Similarly the Jaina disciplinary rules permitted monks to beg food from householders only when the latter's dinner was ready.[3] According to an injunction of the *Majjhima Nikāya* a monk 'ought not to call on families either before or after the midday meal."[4] Monks were specially admonished by the Buddha not to make unreasonable demands on the donors.[5] Through these monastic alms-begging rules not only donor-donee relations were sought to be bettered but also the donee's dignity in the eyes of the donor was ensured. The brāhmaṇas on the contrary appear to have paid scant attention to popular opinion and seem to have been more greedy.

Discriminate alms giving: In order to further augment their claims to people's respect and charity, the heterodox leaders especially the Buddha, not only specified the monk's duty towards lay devotees in return for the alms they received[6] but also emphasised the concept of discriminate giving. Thus according to this newly emerging concept, a gift yielded religious merit only when it was bestowed upon a recipient possessing high moral, intellectual and spiritual qualities.[7] It is specifically laid down in the *Dhammapada* that alms should be given with discrimination.[8] Meant chiefly to offset the claims of the pretentious brāhmaṇas and other rival donees, the prescribed qualifications, therefore, automatically favoured claims of members of their own order as being the worthiest recipients of alms.[9]

[1]*CV*, VII. 3.13.

[2]*MV*, VIII. 1. 35.

[3]*Uttarādhyāyana Sūtra*, Lec. II. 30. *SBE*, XLV.

[4]*Maj. Nik.*, LXIX. Gulissāni Sutta., I. 469.

[5]*Vinaya*, Nissaggiya, VI. 2.

[6]*Maj. Nik.*, XL. Cula-Assapura Sūtta. I. 128; N. Dutt, *Aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism and it's Relation to Hīnayāna*, p. 317.

[7]*PV*, IV. 1.85-86; *Ang. Nik.*, III. VI. 57; VIII. IV. 34.

[8]*Dh. Pada*, 14. 2.

[9]*Paumcariyam*, 57-60; S. Tachibana, *The Ethics of Buddhism*, p. 205; Sramanera Jivaka, 'The Art of Giving' *MB*, Sep. 1959, p. 279-80; K.K. Handiqui, *Yaśastilaka and Indian Culture*, p. 284.

Non-observance of varṇa distinctions: The wide patronage received by the heterodox monks, could be also due to the non-observance on their part of *varṇa* distinction with regard to donors. In contrast to the brāhmaṇa donees, we find monks welcoming alms as much from members of the lower *varṇas* as from those of higher *varṇas.* Both the Buddhist and the Jaina rules emphatically enjoin monks to seek alms without discrimination from every doorstep they pass on their begging round till alms sufficient for their mid-day meal was secured.[1] Pāṇini in fact uses the term *sarvānnina* in the special sense of a monk who accepts all kinds of food on his begging rounds.[2]

Absolute popularity--a myth: It was however not an absolute popularity which was enjoyed by the monks. From our data it would appear that alms were not always forthcoming and frequently alms-seeking monks were even spurned by the householders. Thus from the *Majjhima Nikāya* we learn that when Angulimāla went to Sāvatthi for alms, "he was hit by a clod flung by one man, by a club flung by a second, and by a potsherd flung by a third, so that it was with a broken head streaming with blood, with his bowl smashed and his cloak in tatters, that he presented himself before the Lord."[3]

According to the Jaina text *Sūtrakṛtānga:* "A man, on seeing *śramanas,* brāhmaṇas (whom he detests) degrades himself by various evil deeds. Either he gives them a slap with the open hand to turn them away, or he abuses them."[4] In the *Uttarādhyāyana Sūtra* it is said: "If a layman abuses a monk, he should not grow angry against him."[5] The popularity enjoyed by the members of the heterodox orders, therefore, can be regarded to have been only relatively more than that of their brāhmaṇa counterparts. None of the important donee groupings, however, would appear to have enjoyed complete popularity or commanded the total respect of the masses.

Rivalry between heterodox alms-seekers and their brāhmaṇa counterparts: Contemporary records strongly suggest undercurrents of antagonism and rivalry existing between heterodox monks and brāhmaṇa

[1]S.B. Deo, *History of Jaina Monachism,* p. 173. "As we have already seen, the monk visited all the houses irrespective of the status of the families residing in them" R. Spence Hardy, *Eastern Monachism,* p. 70.

[2]*AA,* V. 2. 9.

[3]*Maj. Nik.,* LXXXVI, Angulimāla Sutta, II. 104.

[4]*Sūtrakṛtānga,* Bk. 2, Lec. 2, *SBE,* vol. XLV.

[5]*Uttarādhyāyana Sūtra,* Lec. II. 24.

donees,[1] and also among members of various heterodox orders. Numerous references to active hate campaigns carried on by them to discredit one another are forthcoming. Thus from a passage of the *Mahāvagga* we learn how "those venerable brethren are trying to discredit the Buddha, *Dhamma* and the *saṁgha.*"[2] It is, however, difficult to assess the extent of this rivalry and to ascertain on its basis the category of donees which enjoyed wider popularity. The very fact that such rivalry existed would indicate the more or less equal popularity enjoyed by the rival donee groups; that alms were not so easily forthcoming; and donors had become more discerning and selective as far as donees were concerned.

The sharp religious differences and clashing interests were bound to create some strains of rivalry between *śramaṇas* and brāhmaṇas,[3] but whether it was as intense as made out in many of the Pāli texts is not sufficiently or even consistently borne out by our sources. Even in majority of Pāli texts wherever we chance upon a reference to *bhikkhus* (monks) as recipients of gifts, we find that brāhmaṇas are invariably bracketed with them.[4] In the *Dīgha Nikāya* are mentioned the five ways in which clansmen should minister to recluses and brāhmaṇas as zenith.[5] A similar practice was also observed by Aśoka in his famous edicts.[6]

A close study of the contemporary data, moreover, suggests that monks and brāhmaṇas functioned as donees on two more or less different planes so that their interests cannot be regarded to have clashed very strongly. Whereas brāhmaṇas in their chief roles of teachers and priests appear to have functioned as an integral part of the existing social system, heterodox recluses on the other hand leading an asocial existence stood apart from the main social stream. The respective positions held by brāhmaṇas and heterodox monks vis-a-vis

[1]*Sut. Nip.,* I-7; III. 4; *Theragāthā,* Canto. VI-CCXXI; *Vimānavatthu,* Third Boat Mansion, 1. 8; *Milinda,* I. 8.

[2]*MV,* VI. 31. 13; *CV,* I. 13. 4; *Ang. Nik.,* IV, Bk. VIII, chaps. 11, 12; *Baveru Jāt.,* III, no. 339.

[3]Y. Krishan,'Was there any Conflict between the Brāhmins and the Buddhists?" *IHQ,* XXX, 1954, pp. 167, 175.

[4]*Dīg. Nik.,* V, Kūtadanta Sutta, 13; *Itivutthaka,* Splendid Mansion. I.I.I.2; *PV,* I, 2; VV, I.I.I.2; *Mahāvastu,* tr. J.J. Jones, pp. 40, 70, 77.

[5]*Dīg. Nik.,* XXXI, Sigālovāda suttanta, III, 191.

[6]Girnār, R.E., III, *CII,* I, no. 9; *CII,* i, p. 17, Delhi Topra P.E., VII, *CII,* I, p. 136.

society appear to be responsible also for monks getting spontaneous alms from the householders, whereas brāhmaṇas were receiving gifts of a more obligatory nature. Our sources reveal how the brāhmaṇas had to be fed and offered gifts on definite sacramental, ceremonial or other such occasions by householders as a part of their obligatory duties which arose out of established social conventions, religious practices or mere superstitious fears.[1] According to the *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra*, if a brāhmaṇa who has come for shelter to the house of a householder receives no food, on departing he takes with him all the spiritual merit of that churlish man.[2] The heterodox monks on the contrary appear to have received spontaneous alms made out of no social compulsions. Even though gifts to them are known to have been made on sacramental occasions also,[3] but generally monks were the recipients of alms which they went seeking not just on sacramental occasions but daily. This important difference between brāhmaṇas and *śramaṇas* as two different categories of donees must have necessarily reduced the scope for the existence of a keen and active rivalry between them.

But whatever strain of antagonism may be evident during the age of the Buddha, it seems to have considerably lessened by the centuries following the Christian era. As Y. Krishan points out: "*Mahāvastu, Avadana-Śataka, Jātakamālā*, all required a *bodhisattva* to bestow gifts on brāhmaṇas and *śramaṇas*. The Chinese travellers make no mention whatsoever of antagonism between brāhmaṇas and Buddhists."[4] The reason for this change in the respective attitudes of the *śramaṇas* and the brāhmaṇas could be that alms-begging by the former was more common only in the initial career of the *Saṁgha*, when it lacked cohesive organisation on a wider scale. But once it succeeded in achieving this, munificent gifts began to be showered directly upon the *Saṁgha*, thereby not only rendering it self-sufficient but also reducing the need for the individual monks to go begging for alms. The monastic establishment came to be considered a challenge to society where benefactions were diverted for the proper functioning of the *Saṁgha*.[5] Individual begging became a thing of the past for the total expendi-

[1]*Āśva. Gṛ. Sūt.*, IV. 7. 1; II. 5. 11-14; *Āpas. Gṛ. Sūt*, VI, 16. 1. 4; *Pāras Gṛ. Sūt.*, I. 293; I.10.5; I.12.5; II.I.5; *Gobh. Gṛ. Sūt.*, IV.3.35.

[2]*Vas. Dh. Sūt*, VII, 6; *Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, V. 10. 27.

[3]*Udāna*, Mucalinda, II, VIII, 17; *Theragāthā*, Canto, III, CLXXI.

[4]Y. Krishan, *op. cit.*, *IHQ*, XXX, p. 170.

[5]Nāsik Cave Ins., of Nahapāṇa, *SI*, Bk. II, no. 58.

ture of the monasteries could not be met out of begging.[1] From the *Mahāvagga*, we learn how a lay devotee desired to bestow robes for the rainy season on the *Saṁgha*, and "food for the incoming *bhikkhus*, and food for the outgoing *bhikkhus*, and food for the sick and food for those who wait upon the sick and a constant supply of congey and bathing robes for the nuns."[2] Similarly Anāthapiṇḍika is said to have built dwelling rooms, store-rooms, cloisters and halls for the monks.[3] The *Jātakas* contain numerous references to the munificent gifts bestowed upon the *Saṁgha*.[4] Thus a certain landowner of Sāvatthi is described as providing all the requisites for the Brotherhood.[5] The *Illīsa Jātaka* speaks of a Lord High Treasurer who lavished eighty crores of money solely on the faith the Buddha taught.[6] Gifts to *Saṁgha* are recorded in several post-Mauryan epigraphs. The Nāsik Cave inscription of the time of Nahapāṇa records how Uṣavadāta bestowed cave dwelling along with a perpetual endowment of three thousand *kahāpaṇas* on the *Saṁgha* generally.[7] In fact, our sources for the post-Mauryan period clearly reveal how Buddhist monasteries (since the other sects except Jainism had already faded out) had grown immensely rich, possessing not only large quantities of food-stuff and other requisite articles, but also enormous wealth in the shape of gold, silver, slaves and even agricultural fields.[8] Such a development must have, therefore, necessarily ended any strains of rivalry which may have existed earlier between the brāhmaṇas and the monks.

[1]Basudeva Upadhyaya, 'The Monastic Economy and Eradication of Beggary in Ancient India, *JBRS, LIV*.

[2]*MV*, VIII, 15. 7.

[3]*CV*, VI. 4. 10.

[4]*Asātarūpa Jāt.*, I, no. 100, p. 242.

[5]*Sasa Jāt.*, III, no. 316, p. 34.

[6]*Illīsa Jāt.*, I, no. 78, p. 197.

[7]Nāsik Cave Ins., 'of the time of Nahapāṇa' *SI*. Bk. II, no. 58, p. 164.

[8]*CV*, VI, 21. 3; V, 37. 1; V, 28. 1; *MV*, VI, 15. 9; VI, 39. 1.

CHAPTER 6

Origins of Beggary

Types of Alms Seekers

Besides the purely religious categories of donees our sources abound with references to other types of alms-seekers of a non-religious nature such as way-farers, tramps, poor beggars and members of those occupational groups, the nature of whose occupation not only kept them constantly on the move but also provided them inadequate means of living.

In the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* we get reference to paupers, cripples, way-farers and beggars as seekers of alms.[1] The story of Sāriputta's mother, as recorded in the *Petavatthu*, describes how a wealthy brāhmaṇa of Benares was "a well unto recluses and brāhmaṇas, indigents, tramps, way-farers and beggars.[2] The *Illīsa Jātaka*[3] describes how a crier was once made to proclaim by beat of drums all through the city that everyone who wanted gold, silver and the like were to come to the house of Illīsa, the treasurer and a large crowd soon assembled at the door carrying baskets and sacks. The *Mahāsupina Jātaka*[4] refers to beggars and religious mendicants seated on the highway, at the street corners and at the doors of King's palace. The *Mahāvastu* refers to alms being made to the blind, the helpless, the poor and the destitute.[5] That beggars soliciting alms was a common sight in the contemporary society is evident from a passage of the Anuśāsana Parva which refers to the destitute, the blind and the distressed (*dināndhkṛpaṇādiṣu*).[6] Aśoka's edicts[7] contain a reference to the measures adopted

[1]*Sam. Nik.*, I, II. 3.3.

[2]*PV*, II.2.

[3]*Illīsa Jāt.*, I, no. 78, p. 199.

[4]*Mahāsupina Jāt.*, I, no. 77, p. 191.

[5]*Mahāvastu*, tr. J.J. Jones, vol. I, pp. 76-77.

[6]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 133.2.

[7]Kalsi R.E., V, *CII*, p. 33; Delhi-Topra P.E., VIII, ibid., p. 136.

by the emperor to provide relief to orphans, old persons, the poor and the miserable, thus clearly vouching for the presence of different classes of wretched people in society. From the Mathurā stone inscription of Huviṣka also we learn that due provision was made for alms-distribution amongst the destitute, hungry and thirsty.[1] The origin of these various categories and their respective need for alms would seem to differ considerably.

Needy travellers: The need for alms in the case of wayfaring travellers could have been only temporary and of a much limited nature. Being mostly drawn from a shifting population moving to and fro between market towns and cities, those merchants, religious mendicants, even royal agents and other wayfarers, who could not afford to carry enough provision to last the entire journey,[2] naturally must have required temporary shelter and a chance meal to take care of their journey as well as their stay in a strange town.[3] Wayfaring travellers were essentially a product of the new economic situation which had been created by the emergence of urban centres and growth of trade especially during the Kuṣāṇa and Sātavāhana periods.[4] Urbanisation and trade had greatly promoted traffic on the highways. In fact, wayfarers as a category of alms-seekers appear to have been large enough to necessitate construction of alms-halls and resting places for them. Common people, as we learn from *Itivutthaka* gave voluntary alms according to their means to wayfarers and tramps,[5] and might have been even coerced into giving it to royal agents; yet we also come across numerous instances of a large number of almonries and rest-houses being built by the rich, both within and without the city gate.[6] According to a passage of the *Vinaya* not far

[1]Mathura Stone Ins., of Huviska, *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 49.

[2]*MV.*, VIII, 1.8; VI. 34.21.

[3]In the *Milindapañho*, I. 32, Nagasena's query 'Great Sir is the distance. It will be difficult to get food on the way. How shall I get there?' is thus answered, 'Only go straight on. You shall get food on the way.'

[4]Kameshwar Prasad, 'The Kushana Towns in India: Problems and Methods, *Pro. IHC*, pp. 36-39; V.K, Thakur, *Urbanisation in Ancient India*, pp. 80-83, 99; B. Gafurov, 'Kushan Civilization and World Culture', *Kushan Studies in USSR*, p. 9.

[5]*Itivutthaka* I., Splendīd Mansion, I. 1.2; *Dīg. Nik.*, V. Kūtadanta Sutta, XIII. 'A noble giver keeping open house, a welling spring whence śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas, the poor and the wayfarers, beggars and petitioners might draw.'

[6]*Vessantara Jāt.*, VI, no. 547; *Bilārikoṣiya Jāt.*, IV, no. 450; *Sivī Jāt.*, IV, no, 499; *Nimi-Jāt.*, VI, no. 541, *Kurudhamma Jāt.*, II, no. 276, *Janasandha Jāt.* IV, no. 468; *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 133.3.

from Sāvatthi alms food came to be prepared in a public rest-house by some guild.[1]

That these hospices were meant to benefit chiefly weary travellers would be evident from the *Dīgha Nikāya* according to which these alms-halls were constructed mostly at a spot where four high roads met, so that whoever might pass that way from any of the four directions could be supplied with alms.[2] Similar impression is also gained from the description of rest-houses given in the *Kulāvaka Jātaka*[3] and in the *Mahā-Ummagga Jātaka.*[4] According to the latter, "then the Great Being so arranged the hall that there was in one part a place for the lying in of destitute women, in another a lodging for stranger Buddhist priests and brāhmaṇas, in another a lodging for other sorts of men, in another a place where foreign merchants should stow their goods, and all these apartments had doors opening." From the *Milindapañho*[5] we learn how the city of Sagala was adorned with hundreds of alms-halls of various kinds.

How these charitable establishments were meant to provide shelter to travellers is also clear from report of the journey undertaken by eight brāhmaṇs, as given in the *Kuru-dhamma Jātaka,* "They took money for their journey, and donned travelling garb, and without resting past one night in a place, travelled quickly until after a few days they took their meal at the alms-hall at the city gate."[6]

Tramps and other semi-beggars: Perhaps to the same category of chance alms-seekers may also belong members of a host of professional groups such as dancers, acrobats, club-fighters, hunters etc., who tramping from one place to another in search of livelihood had very often to subsist on alms in the absence of regular and adequate earning.[7] According to one of the *Jātaka* stories, Bodhisattva was once born "as one of a family of poor acrobats, that lived by begging. So when he grew up he was needy and squalid, and by begging he lived."[8] The *Mahāvastu* describes how some young actors who had come from Takśasilā to Benaras went to

[1] *Vinaya,* Pacittiya, XXI. I.
[2] *Dīg. Nik.*, III, Ambattha Sutta, II, 4.
[3] *Kulāvaka Jāt.*, I, no. 31, p. 79.
[4] *Mahā-Ummaga Jāt.*, VI, no. 546, p. 158.
[5] *Milinda,* I. 2.
[6] *Kuru-dhamma Jāt.*, II, no. 276, p. 253.
[7] Richard Fick, *Soc-Org.*, p. 209.
[8] *Ucchiṭṭha Bhaṭṭa Jāt.*, II, no. 212, p. 117.

merchant's house to beg for alms.[1] According to a verse of the *Mahābhārata* performing artistes and members of other professional groups, leading gypsy life, occasionally subsisted on alms, although such alms-seekers were to be discouraged.[2] A similar view is expressed also by brahmanical lawmakers.[3]

It is noteworthy that these performing artistes, although must have been primarily paid for offering the chief source of entertainment known at that time, yet judging by the present behaviour of this professional grouping, especially that of the eunuchs, it is not unlikely that taking advantage of the prevalent social sanctions, they may have even employed coercion to exact alms.

Orphans, Indigent and Infirm Beggars

The dependence of indigent and infirm beggars on alms was more or less complete and of a lasting nature. The *Loṣaka Jātaka* refers to a beggar family which after the birth of a child became still more beggared.[4]

Beggars have always been described as being in a deplorable and pathetic state with no hope of any permanent alleviation of their miseries. This is much too apparent from the rhetoric question posed in the *Pañcatantra.*[5] "What beggar has come to exalted station?" Except for some miraculous intervention of fate, the circumstances of extreme impoverishment in the case of an individual generally appear to be of a lasting nature and therefore his need for alms would also be more or less constant. The pitiable condition, which marked beggars as they went about seeking alms, is well described in the *Pañcatantra.* "Stammering in the throat, sweat on the countenance, pallor and trembling, the same signs that mark a dying man mark also a beggar."[6] The sorry picture drawn of beggars in the *Sama Jātaka* would further bring out their miserable condition. Thus they are described in the text as wandering about soliciting alms, clothed in rags and carrying potsherds in their hands.[7]

[1] *Mahāvastu,* tr. J.J. Jones, p. 169.
[2] *Mbh.*, Śānti Parva, 37.29, 'A pious man should not make a gift to those who are given to dance and song.'
[3] *Vis. Smṛ.*, III.54.
[4] *Loṣaka Jāt.*, vol. I, no. 41, p. 109.
[5] *Pañcatantra,* tr. Edgerton, p. 52.
[6] Ibid., p. 91.
[7] *Sāma Jāt.*, vol. VI, no. 540, p. 38.

CAUSES OF ORIGIN

Disintegration of close family ties: Whereas the presence of wayfarers and tramps in a society clearly emphasise the large, flexible and heterogeneous character of a rural or urban community, the existence of orphans, indigent and infirm beggars would indicate the absence of close-knit tribal and kinship bonds. As long as kinship relations remain strong, responsibility of looking after the welfare of old and disabled members would lie directly upon that particular kinship group as a whole. It is only when distant and close relations cease to discharge their responsibility towards their less fortunate kinsmen, that orphans and destitutes are cast out of the family-fold to fend for themselves by seeking alms from strangers. It was perhaps no coincidence therefore that scant references to beggars occur in the Vedic texts. Notices of orphans, disabled and destitutes are, however, plentiful in the post-Vedic sources. Their number no doubt increased on account of frequent inter-state wars and repeated scourge of famines. None the less their very presence in large numbers shows that post-Vedic social order had shed its egalitarian character and had begun to manifest all the evils of a class-divided society. It was fast coming under the growing impact of commercial influences, especially in the urban areas. For only in such a commercialised social environment with human relations tending to become more cold and impersonal that a small child less than seven years old, such as described in the *Loṣaka Jātaka,* could have been forsaken by its parents to beg for alms. According to the *Jātaka* story: "Thenceforward the solitary child used to beg his food thereabouts and sleep where he could. He was unwashed and unkempt, and made a living after the fashion of a mud-eating goblin. When he was seven years old, he was picking up and eating like a crow lump by lump, any rice he could find outside a house door, where they flung away the rinsings of the rice pot."[1]

Though instances of children caring for old and infirm parents are not altogether lacking,[2] still the fact that kinship bonds were no longer as strong by the post-Vedic period as they were in the earlier period may be inferred from the following passage of the *Ambacora Jātaka*: "At this time, Sakka, king of heaven, thought who, I wonder, in this

[1] *Loṣaka Jāt.*, vol. I, no. 41, p. 106.
[2] *Maj. Nik.*, LXXXI, Ghatikāra Sutta, II. 51.

world of men support their parents, pay homage to the aged members of their family?"[1] In fact, Kauṭilya in order to deter people from being neglectful towards their close kinsmen lays down: "If a person with means does not maintain his children and wife, his father and mother, his brothers who have not come of age and his unmarried and widowed sisters, a fine of twelve *paṇas* (shall be imposed)."[2] Aśoka in his edicts strongly decries the growing indifference besetting all human relationships[3] and enjoins all his subjects to be specially respectful, considerate and courteous towards relatives and the aged[4] so that relations deserving attention are not treated with indifference. *Sāṅkhāyana* stipulates: "Let him immediately afterwards, offer food to a female under his protection, to a pregnant woman, to boys and to old people."[5] It would appear that an important circumstance which led to a person being forsaken by his close relations could be some contagious disease such as leprosy from which he might be suffering. In such an event the disowned relative could have no option but to live on alms. That such prejudices or fear counted greatly would be apparent from the Dharmaśāstric rule which considered a brāhmaṇa leper as unfit to be invited at a *śrādha* meal.[6]

Economic class disparities: Prevalence of beggary as an institution is nothing but an overt symptom of deep seated economic disparities creeping into the social framework—a widening gulf between the rich and the poor. That beggary may thrive only in a non-egalitarian social order is sufficiently borne out by our sources. The latter confirm the presence of the very rich *seṭṭhis* and *gahapatis* owning eighty crores of wealth,[7] and the extremely poor described as *daliddas* in the Pāli texts, who lived on the leaving of other people's food.[8] Such economic disparities could have arisen mainly out of inequitable distribution of social wealth. A major share of it was being appropriated by merchants and rulers in their capacity as organisers of production. Some economic disparity may have also resulted from steep fluctuations in the fortunes of individuals, suggesting greater competition and insecurities besetting contemporary economic life. We learn

[1] *Ambacora Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 344, p. 91.
[2] *AŚ*, II.1.28.
[3] Girnār RE., IV, *CII*, I, p. 7.
[4] Ibid., III. Ibid., p. 5.
[5] *Sānkh. Gṛ. Sūt.*, II.14.21.
[6] P.V. Kane, *Hist. Dh. S.*, II, pt. II, p. 846.
[7] *MV*, V.1.29.
[8] *Dh. Pada*, BK. 2, Story 9.

from the *Asampadāna Jātaka* how for some reason or other Piliya of Benares got into difficulties and lost all his property and was reduced to beggary.[1] Similar references to sudden crash of an individual's fortune reducing him to beggary are also forthcoming from the *Mahāsutsoma* and *Sāma Jātakas*.[2] Very often individuals were forced to seek alms also due to some unforeseen natural calamity. In the *Therīgāthā* we get the story of a brāhmaṇa's daughter whose kinsfolk caught the snake-blast disease and died. Unable to support herself otherwise she went from house to house with a potsherd to maintain herself by alms.[3] That similar misfortunes could befall almost any individual belonging to any *varṇa* would be apparent from numerous contemporary notices of brāhmaṇa beggars.[4]

Social ostracism: Moreover with the tightening of *varṇa* associations, any transgression of the rigid rules framed to preserve their homogenous character and cohesion resulted in ostracization of members from that particular *varṇa* order. In view of growing affiliation of craft with *varṇa*, which appears to have already become formidable by the period of the *Dharmasūtras*, such social ostracization must have reduced the retrograde member to the level of a social leper or a cripple from the economic point of view. Since excommunication from *varṇa* entailed strict restrictions with regard to even food being given or received from co-*varṇa* members, the *patita* or the fallen person must have been virtually left with no option but beggary. Thus Kauṭilya although prescribes a fine of twelve *paṇas* for all those who neglect their close kith and kin, yet makes significant exception with regard to such indifference being shown towards family members who are outcastes.[5]

Aversion to Beggars

Despite such strong advocacy of the principle of charity, together with the constantly lurking fear of falling a prey to a similar misfortune, beggars were not always welcome to the householders. Thus if in the *Mahāvastu* we chance upon such references, "time and again when

[1]*Asampadāna Jāt.*, vol. I, no. 131, p. 286.
[2]*Mahāsutsoma Jāt.*, vol. V, no. 537, p. 253; *Sāma Jāt.*, vol. VI, no. 540, p. 38.
[3]*Therīgāthā*, XLIX, Candā, tr. Mrs. Rhys Davids, p. 75.
[4]References to poor brāhmaṇa beggars are found in *Junhā Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 456; *Sattubhasta Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 402; *Bilārikosiya Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 450.
[5]*AŚ*, II.128.

he saw a beggar the sight gladdened his heart",[1] in texts such as the *Petavatthu*, we also come across the story of wealthy Dhanapāla who so much disliked giving alms that while taking his meals he would lock his doors to prevent beggars from seeing him.[2] We learn from the *Maṇikaṇṭha Jātaka* how everybody was annoyed at this begging and solicitation.[3] The beggar often received nothing better than "gruel made of broken lumps of rice, solid food stale or decaying or sprouts dried and burnt.[4]

Such aversion to beggars appears to have sprung from their large numbers which must have proved disconcerting to householders. The *Visayha Jātaka* refers to six hundred thousand beggars who all repeatedly cried out, "Give to us also".[5] Their unkempt and revolting appearance, especially of lepers[6] and of those maimed in body or suffering from contagious diseases may have also evoked a sense of revulsion in onlookers. Fraudulent ways and duplicity employed by some of them to evoke pity or win respect of householders may have further reduced the trust and pity felt for them otherwise. We learn from the *Culla-Paduma Jātaka*, how a wicked wife took her paramour upon her shoulders and went abegging among the people.[7] Stories in the *Jātaka* are replete with references to false ascetics and monks,[8] who according to the *Dhajavihetha Jātaka*, would go about by day in ascetic garb and misconduct themselves at night.[9] Their greedy and indolent ways, especially of those who were physically fit, also helped to create a feeling of scornful contempt towards them. The *Āditta Jātaka* informs how one day looking around his alms-hall the householder thought: "My alms are devoured by worthless greedy people. I don't like this."[10]

But over and above these disparaging factors, it was the prevailing

[1]*Mahāvastu*, vol. I, tr. J.J. Jones, p. 4.
[2]*PV*, II.7.6.
[3]*Maṇikaṇṭha Jāt.*, vol. II, no. 253, p. 197.
[4]*Indriya Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 423, p. 276.
[5]*Visayha Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 340, p. 85.
[6]*Maj. Nik.*, LXXV, Magandiya Sutta, I.506. 'It is like a leper, who with his limbs all sores and rottenness, is being eaten alive with worms and tears open his wounds with his nails.'
[7]*Culla-Paduma Jāt.*, vol. II, no. 193, p. 83.
[8]*Ambacora Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 344; *Godha Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 325; *Tittira Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 438, p. 320.
[9]*Dhajavihetha Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 391, p. 189.
[10]*Āditta Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 424, p. 280.

economic conditions of prosperity or drought and famine which to a large extent appear to have conditioned the householder's response to beggars. This is very definitely proved by a passage of the *Mahāvagga:* "Now at that time Vaiśālī was well provided with food, the harvest was good, alms were easy to obtain.[1]

Alms-Hall (Sattra or Dānasāla)

It is noteworthy that besides considerations of practical convenience, it may have been the desire to shun actual contact with beggars, which led to the construction of alms-halls. These alms-halls rendered possible the distribution of alms on a more organised and extensive scale, though perhaps on a less personal basis. In the *Kesava Jātaka* an alms-seeker thus complains: "But there are none to give it with their own hands with marks of affection and love."[2] Appearance of alms-halls or public resting places seems to be a striking development of the post-Vedic period. It may, however, be possible to trace its genesis to the occasional distribution of food to the poor and the needy undertaken at the time of big *yajñas* during the Vedic age.[3] The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad,* carries a reference to Janaśruti Pautrāyaṇa who had erected everywhere shelters in order to feed at all times all people that came from all quarters.[4] But organised and collective mode of distribution of food and shelter on a larger and more popular basis is meant chiefly to cope with the growing needs and demands of a commercial culture. Our sources reveal how it had become almost customary for the city rich to build five to six alms-halls at different points in the city.[5] According to the *Milindapañho* the city of Sagala was richly adorned with a hundred varieties of halls where gifts were given.[6] The Garha (Jasdan) stone inscription of Rudrasena I refers to a *sattra* erected by the brothers of Khara(r)patha.[7] But whether existence of these alms-halls in any way reduced the number

[1]*MV,* VI.32.1.

[2]*Kesava Jāt.,* vol. III, no. 346, p. 94.

[3]*Mbh.,* Aśvamedhika Parva, 92.2-3. ref. to the poor, the blind and the helpless being gratified with gifts at the conclusion of *Aśvamedha* sacrifice, ibid., Āśramavāsika Parva, 19.12.

[4]*Ch. Up.,* IV, 1-2, vide P.V. Kane, *Hist. Dh. S.,* II, pt. II, p. 838.

[5]*Khadiranga Jāt.,* vol. I, no. 40; *Visayha Jāt.,* vol. III, no. 340; *Sankha Jāt.,* vol. IV, no. 442, p. 9.

[6]*Milinda.,* I.2.

[7]Garha (Jasdan) Stone Ins., *EI.,* XVI, no. 17, p. 239.

of beggars soliciting alms from common householders is difficult to ascertain in the absence of evidence of a more explicit nature. That some of the rich folks continued to distribute alms at their own doorsteps is borne out by the story of Ankura contained in the *Petavatthu.* We learn from there how sixty thousand cartloads of food were distributed daily at his house.[1]

State Organised Poor Relief

By Mauryan period organisation of poor-relief had come to be regarded a part of state duty. This is clear from Kauṭilya's injunction: "The king should maintain children, aged persons and persons in distress, when these are helpless."[2] In the *Mahābhārata* it is laid down that the king should set up houses for the distribution of food. From the *Nimi Jātaka* we learn how king Nimi in his devotion to alms giving made five alms-halls.[3] The *Śudhabhojana Jātaka* also makes a similar reference.[4] At least during the Mauryan period a well organised system of poor relief seems to have existed.[5] But whether it materially lessened the evils of beggary and thereby helped to reduce its burden on common householders cannot be well ascertained.

[1]*PV.,* I.9.40.

[2]*AŚ,* II, I.26.

[3]*Nimi Jāt.,* vol. VI, no. 541, p. 54.

[4]*Śudhabhojana Jāt.,* vol. V, no. 535, p. 203.

[5]M.H. Gopal, *Mauryan Public Finance.*

CHAPTER 7

Gift Articles in the Changing Material Context

All things moveable and immoveable, animate and inanimate, finished and unfinished could constitute *deya* or gift-objects, provided these were available with the donor and were of use to the recipient. It is understood that anything which is an object of gift is also capable of being transferred. But we notice a few exceptions to this principle. Thus references to the gift of even one's own flesh, limbs or some other body organ such as eyes are contained in the Pāli texts in the most laudatory of terms. From the *Milindapañho* we learn how Suppiya, the believing woman, cut flesh from her own thigh to provide broth for a sick *bhikkhu.*[1] King Sivi gifted his eyes to the man who begged them of him.[2] In case of these gift-objects although the donor's right to gift is undisputed, yet their transferable character depending on their utility for the recipient, is highly doubtful.

It seems that stories of such gifts were deliberately invented in order to impress upon the people the merit of making gifts leading to even physical disabilities. Compared to the donation of invaluable human organs even ordinary items, such as drinking water[3] or fuel-wood, in fact, fall more in the category of gifts proper. That it was not unusual for the donor to find out the special needs and requirements of the donee prior to the making of the gift would be apparent from the way a donor addresses the prospective recipient in the *Vinaya Piṭaka:* "Honoured Sir, do let me know what will be of use?"[4] That the worth of an article as a gift-object was generally determined by the utility value it held for the donee would be evident

[1]*Milinda.*, IV.8.25.

[2]*Milinda.*, 2.42 ; *Mbh.*, Aśvamedhika Parva, 93.75.

[3]*VV*, Boat Mansion, I.6 'I saw monks who were weary and thirsty. Gladly I gave them water to drink'.

[4]*Vinaya*, Sutta Vibhanga, VI.I.

from the rhetoric question posed in the *Hitopadeśa:* "What has a healthy person to do with medicine."[1]

Essential and Non-Essential Nature of Gift-Items

Judging by provisions required by an ordinary person for his survival, we may classify all gift-objects as subsistence (or necessity) goods and non-essential (or luxury and prestige) goods. The line of demarcation between the two will always remain very fine. Such a classification will be necessarily subjective, conditioned essentially by the relative scarcity or availability of a particular commodity at different stages of material progress, in a given geographical region characterised by a distinctive climate and topography.

Even essential articles may be differentiated on the basis of the primary nature of donee's need for them. Whereas perennial human needs for food, clothing and shelter may be fulfilled either directly or indirectly in the form of some means of living such as a piece of land or a milch cow acquired through gift, other needs although arising out of basic necessities can still proliferate in keeping with the exigent needs of a particular cultural group under special economic circumstances. It is only in this context that Buddha's prescription of the alms-bowl as a necessary article for the *bhikkhus* can be understood.[2] Similarly the acceptance of the gift of sandalwood, a seemingly luxury article when allowed by Buddha[3] to be used for medicinal purpose by his disciples, would undoubtedly fall in the category of essential gift-items.

Pali texts also reveal unmistakable linkage between local customs based on necessities arising out of ecological conditions and the changing pattern of gift-objects. In a passage of the *Mahāvagga*, the Buddha is asked to permit the use of sheep, goat or deer skin coverlets by the monks of Avanti and southern regions, as these were the common types of coverlets used there.[4] Such coverlets were not needed by monks as long as they were confined to the lands of Magadha and Kośala. But once they moved out of this area they had to come to terms with local practices in the outer zones. Considering the fact

[1]*HD*, Mitralābha, Story 2, 15.

[2]*CV*, V, 91.

[3]*MV*, VI, 11.2.

[4]Ibid., V, 13.6.

that all requisite articles to be used by monks were to be acquired only through alms, such a sanction would indirectly mean that coverlets made of animal skin, in keeping with the local practice, began to figure as essential gift-objects at this time.

The gradually multiplying number of necessity articles allowed to monks, while reflecting the latter's gradual leaning towards a life of greater ease and comfort, also furnishes an interesting index to the rapid change overtaking material culture during the centuries following the age of the Buddha. Variations and increase in gift-items emphasise the transitional aspect of this period. Pāli texts reveal how besides cooked food, drink, raiments and chance shelter, the *bhikkhus* were in course of time permitted to accept numerous other finished and unfinished articles also. These comprised bedding,[1] medicine,[2] alms-bowl,[3] lamp and oil[4] seat, chair,[5] shoes,[6] fan,[7] umbrella[8] and vessels made of various materials.[9] Later, even those items which normally would constitute non-essential articles were incorporated in the list of acceptable necessity articles for monks. We get reference to the Buddha allowing his followers the use of thimble,[10] bag,[11] hair-oil,[12] mosquito-curtains,[13] fly-whisks,[14] sunshades,[15] pair of scissors,[16] razors,[17] sheaths to hold these razors,[18] pincers,[19] boxes for keeping eye-ointment[20] loom,[21] strainers,[22] spitoon,[23] etc.

Interestingly even the staunch protagonists of *varṇa* system had to concede to the supreme nature of these basic human needs. A fresh code of conduct (*āpatkāla dharma*) meant to be exclusively observed during straitened circumstances was evolved. Thus Yājñavalkya states in no uncertain terms: "If a brāhmaṇa, in times of extreme distress,

[1]*MV*, V.10.3; V.13.6.
[2]*Dīg. Nik.*, III. 2. 259; *Āpannaka Jāt.*, vol. I, no. 1, p. 1; *Gandhāra Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 406, p. 225.
[3]*CV*, V.9.1.
[4]*Maj. Nik.*, II.205; *Dīg. Nik.*, III.2.258.
[5]*CV*, VI.2.4.
[6]Ibid., VI.21.3.
[7]Ibid., V.23.2.
[8]Ibid., V.23.2.
[9]*MV*, 14.1-2; *CV*, V.16.2.
[10]*CV*, V.11.5.
[11]Ibid.
[12]*MV*, VI.13.1.
[13]*CV*, V.13.2.
[14]Ibid., V.23.1.
[15]Ibid., V.13.3.
[16]Ibid., VI.21.3.
[17]Ibid., V.27.3.
[18]Ibid.
[19]Ibid., V.27.5.
[20]*MV*, VI.12.1.
[21]*CV*, V.21.1.
[22]Ibid. V.13.1.
[23]Ibid., VI.20.2.

accepts gifts (from any one) or takes his food anywhere he is not affected by sin, for he is like the fire."[1]

Dharmasūtra writers, overcoming their strong *varṇa* prejudices permit even under normal conditions the acceptance of basic necessity items, such as food, fuel, water, fodder etc. from members of all *varṇas* including even the Ugras.[2] Those gift-articles which are generally and repeatedly acknowledged by lawgivers as worthy gift-items, perhaps may also be assigned to the category of essential goods. The list comprises honey,[3] grain[4] venison,[5] roots,[6] fruits,[7] fodder,[8] land,[9] fuel,[10] parched grain,[11] small fish,[12] vegetable,[13] a pair of clothes,[14] milch cow,[15] a vehicle,[16] (shelter) in the house,[17] horse,[18] sesamum,[19] clarified butter,[20] brass vessel[21] and even gold.[22]

Luxury goods: By luxury articles would be understood those goods which are either not used at all by common masses or are very sparingly used by them. Our sources reveal a super abundance of gift-objects whose seemingly luxury character may have been to some extent derived from the non-primary nature of the donee's need for them. But as observed above, distinction between primary and non-primary needs of donee would always be related to the state of material development reached by a certain cultural group. Hence when

[1]*Yāj. Smṛ.*, III.41.
[2]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, XVII. 3; *Āpas Dh. Sūt.*, I.18.1. *Viṣ. Smṛ.*, V.7.10.
[3]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, XVII.I; *Manu*, IV.247; *Āpas Dh. Sūt.*, I.207.21.
[4]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, XIX.16; *Manu*, X.114; IV, 24.
[5]*Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, I.2.7.21; *Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, VII.3.
[6]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt*, XVII.3; *Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, I.18.1.; *Manu*, IV, 247.
[7]*Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, I.27.21; *Khad. Gṛ. Sūt.*, IV.1.11.
[8]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, XXII.23; *Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, I.27.21, *Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, XIV.12.
[9]*Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, IV.7.9, *Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, II.10.26.1.
[10]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, XVII.3; *Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, I.1.4.3; *Manu*, IV.247.
[11]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, XVII.3.
[12]*Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, XIV.12; *Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, VII.3.
[13]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, VII.3.
[14]*Manu*, IV.231; 233: *Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, XIX.16.
[15]*Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, XVIII.16; *Manu*. XI.135.
[16]*Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, XIV.12; *Manu*, IV.232.
[17]*Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, I.2.7.21; *Manu*, IV.230.
[18]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, XIV.16; *Manu*, IV.231.
[19]*Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, IV.7-9; *Manu*, IV.229.
[20]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, XIX.16; *Manu*, XI.134.
[21]*Gobh. Gr. Sūt.*, III.2.45; *Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, XXIX.17; *Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, III.7.18.
[22]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, XIX.16; XX.13; *Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, IV.7.9.

viewed against the pastoral setting of the early Vedic period, gift of slaves or vehicles may bear an obvious luxury character. But in the context of the expanding field-economy of post-Vedic times the same objects may not fit so well in the category of luxury gift-items. The explicit ostentatious character of certain articles such as chariots, palatial mansions, pleasure gardens, jewels and ornaments would, however, remain constant under all economic conditions. Similarly the act of munificence evident in the construction of shrines and installation of images, gateways, railings, pillars which were undertaken on such an extensive scale during the post-Mauryan period, may also be referred to the same category. A few other kind of popular gift-items such as garlands,[1] incense[2] and perfumes,[3] figuring so prominently in the contemporary Pāli and Brahmanical texts, although not wholly opulent in nature may still be characterised as luxury items on account of the purely non-primary nature of the donee's need which is fulfilled by them.

Costly and relatively rare gift-articles on account of their natural intrinsic value, and superior craftsmanship would also pertain to the class of luxury goods. Perhaps the best example of this category of gift-items are objects such as vessels,[4] vehicles[5] even pillars and columns[6] made of gold or profusely inlaid with precious stones and gems.[7] Articles made out of various other expensive materials brought over long distances, such as ivory, sandalwood, rare varieties of furs and skins, would also bear an apparent luxury character. A relative increase in the gift of such objects would not only suggest a wider market for these articles but also reflect longstanding experience and technical excellence reached in those particular crafts. In the *Vidhurapaṇḍita Jātaka* there is a reference to gift of heavenly silk[8] while the *Mahāvagga* alludes to monks using shoes of various hues like the wings of partridges.[9]

Hence from our sources it appears that more than satisfying the

[1]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, VII.3; *Maj. Nik.*, III.205; *CV*, V.18.1.
[2]*Aśva. Gr. Sūt.*, IV.7.17. *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 57.38.
[3]*Maj. Nik.*, III.205: *Dīg. Nik.*, III.2.259; *Manu*, IV.250.
[4]*Dh. Pada*, BK, 25, Story 12, Nānāghat Cave Ins., *SI*, vol. I, BK. II, no. 82.
[5]*Mbh.*, Āraṇyaka Parva, 97.13; Anuśāsana Parva, 106.20.
[6]Ibid., Aśvamedhika Parva, 91.24.
[7]*Dh. Pada*, BK. 26, Story 33.
[8]*Vidhurapaṇḍita Jāt.*, vol. VI, no. 545.
[9]*MV*, V.2.3.

donee's primary needs, it was the opulent, aesthetic and cultural cast of these luxury gift-items which was significant. But whereas some non-essential commodities on account of their superfine, rare or opulent quality and expensive nature would be clearly beyond the reach of common man, others although basically constituting necessity articles may still be so scarce at a particular time or place as to be naturally treated as luxury articles. Similarly necessity items such as food, cattle, land when gifted in quantities far exceeding the minimum requirements of donee, may also lose their character of a necessity good. Their very large quantum would either turn them into means of appropriating luxury articles by the recipients or would invest the gift-objects with an air of prestige.

In this connection it needs to be pointed out that the storage and preservation of surplus goods, even though may not seem to be such a formidable problem in the context of advanced technology of later times,[1] yet its overreaching importance in the earlier phases of material development cannot be over-emphasised.[2] In fact, some impression about the magnitude of the problem in early societies may be had from the observation made by Gluckman with regard to tribal societies: "They all had primary goods only, and no luxuries. That is practically all their goods had to be consumed at once, since they had only foods which easily rotted or were eaten by insects in their simple means of storage, clothes of skin, bark, cloth or other material with relatively little wear."[3] In the economic system noticed by Richards amongst the Bembas of North Rhodesia, accumulation of large quantities of any type of goods is neither possible nor considered desirable.[4] Perhaps such a situation may be found to hold good for all societies passing through initial stages of social development. Consequently in such an economic situation a man with a thousand heads of cattle cannot by himself consume all their milk, meat and

[1]*Milinda.*, IV.I.27, 'There was a rich man, great in wealth and property, one who had stores of gold and silver and valuables, and stores of all kinds of wheat, one who had rice, and paddy, and barley, and dry grain, and oilseed, and beads, and peas, and every other edible seed, who had ghee and oil, and butter, and milk, and curds, and honey and sugar, and molasses, all put away in store-rooms, in jars, and pots, and pans, and every sort of vessel.'
[2]Stephen Fuchs, *The Origin of Man and His Culture*, p. 80.
[3]Max Gluckman, *PLR*, p. 13.
[4]Richards, *Land, Labour and Diet in Northan Rhodesia*, quoted in Gluckman, *PLR*, p. 53.

skins.[1] He can either use them to attract and support dependents and thus acquire power over people or he can give or share the surplus cattle or even meat and skins with others, thereby establishing his own claim to similar share whenever fortune favoured the other party more. In fact, this mode of giftmaking in its other form of *potlatch* seems to have constituted an important basis of all inter- and intra-tribal relationships.[2] Perhaps faint traces of the same practice may be evident from the following exposition of Manu by Medhatithi: "In certain localities grain is lent out in spring and in the autumn of the same year double of it is taken."[3] Contemporary literature is replete with notices which would suggest that similar economic situations were responsible for gifts of surplus items being made in large quantum.

Prestige goods: Prestige gift-items on the other hand, although invariably made on ceremonial occasions, were not always made in large quantum. As field research and to some extent contemporary data would suggest more than their quantum the significance of certain gift-articles was derived from the relationships and status they tended to symbolise. As Evans Pritchard rightly points out: "A single small artifact may be a nexus between persons e.g., a spear which passes from father to son by gift or inheritance is a symbol of their relationship and one of the bonds by which it is maintained."[4]

Symbolic representations of human relationships or symbolic associations with certain offices of status would therefore lend certain gift-articles with a highly prestigious aspect. The gift of such obejcts not only would confer prestige on both the donor and the donee, but also specify the nature of relationship existing between them or even seek to create new ones based on friendship and cordiality. However in certain cases, as in that of *patlatch,* relationships based on social or political rivalry are also not completely ruled out.

The object of strengthening or creating new ties, which is sought through the medium of such giftmaking, as well as the element of personal relationship so conspicuous in it would naturally restrict the purview of prestige-gift to small or materially less advanced tribal

[1]Gluckman. *PLR*, p 14.

[2]Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, pp. 26-27.

[3]Medhatithi on Manu, VIII.3. '*Kvachiddeśe Vasaṃte dhānyam prayujyata śaradi dviguṇam pratyadtyate*'.

[4]Max Gluckman, *PLR*, p. 46.

societies.[1] Only in such societies can close personal ties be built and sustained through continual exchange of gifts. Moreover it is only in small tribal societies that material goods tend to serve a more symbolic purpose.[2]

Except for references to gifts made in large quantum on big ceremonial occasions, such as those recorded in the epics, not many instances of the gifting of symbolic prestige items are forthcoming from our sources. It may be suggested that this omission was perhaps due to the traditionalised concept of dāna which was becoming entrenched by the time of the Buddha and which did not comprehend giftmaking on a personal level within its range. In fact, gifts to brāhmaṇas, *sramaṇas,* poor and the needy would be found to be made always on an impersonal level.

Whether popularity of gift-objects was totally governed by the prevailing material conditions, especially in the form of the surplus available, or whether certain other ritualistic compulsions also operated and vested gift-items with a special socio-religious efficacy would require a careful examination.

Our data reveals that most of the articles continued to figure as gift-objects in lesser or greater quantity throughout the period under study. To try and work out clear-cut chronological stratifications on their basis becomes difficult. Nevertheless, a general analysis of the pattern of popularity during the period under study as well as that immediately preceding it, might enable us to roughly distinguish three separate groups of gift-articles, which were apparently more popular than the rest during three successive stages of material development.

Popular Gift-Articles Against a Pastoral Background

Making allowance for a certain amount of cultural overlapping due to uneven development[3] natural in a large country like ours, it is

[1]J. Beattie, *Other Cultures*, p. 201, 'This is one of the reasons why gift exchange which is essentially a relationship between persons, plays a much less important role in modern western societies than it does in 'simpler', preliterate ones.'

[2]Evans Pritchard, *The Nuer*, p. 89, quoted by Max Gluckman, *PLR*, p. 46. 'From another point of view material culture may be regarded as part of social relations for material objects are chains along which social relationships run, and the more simple material culture, the more numerous are relationships expressed through it.'

[3]D.P. Chattopadhyaya, *Buddhism: The Marxist Approach*, p. 20; G.M. Bongard Levin, 'Some Problems,' *HS*, p. 215.

interesting to note that alongwith slaves, horses, animal skins, it was predominantly cattle which was the chief item of gift during the Vedic period when material culture was still too deeply embedded in pastoral traditions. Pastoral ethos may, in fact, be detected even in the earlier portions of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Cattle: Literary sources pertaining to this period, especially the two Epics, are full of references to the gift of cattle in very large numbers. These gifts were almost entirely made by tribal chieftains and rulers to their ministrant priests. The fact is significant since cattle due to its best suitability to pastoral and agrarian conditions was the chief category of wealth recognised for a long time.[1] Cattle not only catered to the dietary needs of the people in the form of dairy products and meat but also provided clothing by furnishing leather, skins and wool. Bullocks were employed for drawing carts and ploughing, and even its excrement, besides being valued for its medicinal property, served as an important source of fuel and manure.[2]

Hence not only during the early nomadic phase in the life of Vedic Āryans did all social and economic activities depend upon it,[3] but even in the subsequent period of a more settled culture based increasingly on agrarian economy, cattle continued to be the chief spoil captured by kings and tribal chiefs in intermittent warfare. The consequent acquisition and concentration of an excessively large number of cattle in the hands of these chieftains may have later turned into economic liability, especially in the swiftly declining pastoral milieu. The difficulty could, however, be lessened either through large-scale decimation of cattle on the occasion of *soma* sacrifices or by giving them away in gift to be used for husbandry purposes by the donee. With agricultural food fast replacing animal food in the dietary requirements of the people,[4] the former course although very often resorted to must have tended to prove economically ungainful. Gift-

[1]Macdonell and Keith, 'It is clear that cattle, not land was the real foundation of wealth', vide, D.P. Chattopadhyaya, 'Source of Idealism', *HS*, p. 256.

[2]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 65.38; R. Ganguli, 'Cattle and Cattle-rearing in Ancient India', *ABORI*, XII, p. 218.

[3]R.S. Sharma, 'Forms of Property' *EHS*, p. 95.

[4]*Vis. Smṛ.*, 73; 74; 75; 77-78. 'The merit which is acquired by renouncing meat diet, cannot be acquired by living on holy fruits or flowers, even a forest dwelling hermit fails to acquire that by living on *nīvara* grain. The animal whose meat I take in this world shall eat my flesh in the next. This is the etymology of the term *māṁsa* as given by the wise.'

ing cattle, on the other hand, appears to have provided the right answer to the problem. Through it the royal donors not only acquired great spiritual merit and succeeded in displaying the superiority of their wealth but also helped in stepping up agricultural production to meet the demands of a growing population.

With the steady growth of iron industry in the second half of the first millennium B.C. and the consequent passing away of the pastoral order, kingdoms shedding their tribal character now bore a more territorial aspect. It was no longer cattle but land and other kinds of more durable and precious items with permanent exchange value which now began to be coveted as spoils. The kings and chiefs, therefore, could no longer have owned cattle in such excessive quantum as to necessitate their gift in large numbers. In fact, greater popularity of dairy-products as gift-objects and the repeated notices of wealth owning *gahapatis* in the post-Vedic literature would perhaps indicate a wider distribution of cattle wealth at this time.[1] Compared to kings and tribal chieftains of the former times, these cattle-owning peasant householders and large estate owners must have required cattle for their own fields to carry on various agricultural operations such as ploughing, harrowing, threshing and even for transporting the produce to market as well as for dairy-products. Hence the new dominant category of cattle-owners could scarcely be expected to spare them for religious sacrifices or even for gifts on a large scale. No wonder therefore, despite the very strong injunction, contained in the *Dharmasūtras* with regard to gift of kine to brāhmaṇas,[2] there is a sizeable decrease in gift of cattle in the post-Vedic period. By this time, we find that the references are mostly to gift of a bullock or a cow along with calf. But even where the references are to hundreds and thousands of kine as we find in the Nāsik and Nānāghāṭ cave inscriptions of the Sātavāhana rulers,[3] the exact number of recipients is not mentioned and may be assumed to have either exceeded more than one brāhmaṇa or bears reference to brāhmaṇas in general. Moreover, the fact that milch-vessel is generally specified alongwith the

[1]Suvira Jaiswal, *The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*, p. 117. With the change over from pastoral to agricultural economy, the number of cattle reared now was much less, and these were owned by individual families or clans of the vaiṣya class.

[2]*Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, XXIX.18-19; XII.3; *Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, XXII.14. *ṛṣabhika sahasraśca gā dadyāt*; *Manu.*, XI.137, *dhenum payasvinim.*

[3]Nāsik Cave Ins., SI., vol. I, Bk. II, no. 59; Nānāghāt Cave Ins., SI., vol. I, Bk. II. no. 82.

cow[1] would imply that the latter was very definitely meant for the personal use of the donee.

In the predominantly urban complex of the post-Mauryan period, even though there is an evident fall in the gift of cattle, yet its popularity as gift-item was never totally extinguished, for urbanisation during the period under consideration could never have been very extensive or complete.[2] Thus we learn from a verse of the *Bhagavatī Sūtra*, how a brāhmaṇa was in possession of a large number of cows kept in a big cowshed at Saravaṇa near Nālandā.[3] Its continued over-reaching importance in the life of the people may be gauged from the nature of substitute gift-items suggested in case the donor was unable to give a cow itself.[4] The *Smṛti* texts and the *Purāṇas* abound with references to gift of cows made of gold, silver, sesamum, etc.

Buffalo: In the context of gift of cattle, interestingly, except for a solitary reference contained in the *Śatatapa Saṁhitā* (a late *Smṛti* text),[5] we do not come across any instance of buffaloes figuring as gift-objects, even though the practice of domesticating them is well confirmed by our literary sources.[6] From a passage of the *Milindapañho* it would appear that buffaloes were even used for purposes of barter.[7] What makes such omission more glaring is the fact of greater usefulness of buffalo as compared to cow. According to authorities on animal husbandry, a buffalo not only gives on an average almost three times more milk than cow but its milk is also richer than that of the cow and contains about fifty per cent more fat. The buffalo bull is an animal of strength and can draw very heavy loads over long distances.[8]

The paradox implied in the above phenomenon struck D.D. Kosambi, who observes: "(By later Vedic period) the buffalo had

[1]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 63.33. *Kāṁsyopadohanāṃ dhenum.*

[2]Dilip K. Chakrabarti, 'Some Theoretical Aspects of Early Indian Urban Growth', *Purātattva*, no. 7. Before the modern industrial period there was no large-scale drift to the city anywhere. In any ancient context the landscape was predominantly rural, and the rural element was quite strong even within the cities.

[3]*Bhagavatī Sūtra*, XV. 1.540, vide J.C. Sikdar, *Studies in the Bhagawatī Sūtra*, p. 152.

[4]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 57.30, *dhenuṃ tilānaṃ.*

[5]*Śatatapa Śaṁhitā*, I.17. In the gift of a buffalo, one should give away a she buffalo endued with a golden weapon.

[6]*Gaut. Dh., Sūt.*, XVII. 23.

[7]*Milinda.*, IV.8.17.

[8]Harbans Singh, *Domestic Animals*, India—the Land and People Series, p. 1.

been tamed for agriculture. Without this useful and characteristically Indian animal, the swampy track that most of the Gangetic basin must have been, could not have been brought under cultivation; yet the animal has left no mark upon our scriptures, except that it was assigned to Yama, the death God to ride on, and made into the demon killed by the blood-thirsty mother goddess Kāli."[1]

The only plausible explanation which may account for this apparent paradox can be that whereas the Vedic Āryans had throughout their living memory been closely associated with and totally dependent upon the cow, which they naturally valued greatly (even though they came to deify the cow much later),[2] buffalo was a strange animal to them. They became acquainted with it only after their entry into the Gangetic plain.[3] Initially therefore they must have viewed the buffalo with obvious suspicion. Later however they came to appreciate its usefulness and started domesticating it, even used it as a standard unit of value. Nevertheless, they continued to associate the buffalo with the native people and their culture and hence always held it in derogation. As pointed out by Kosambi, the only place which they could assign to it in their religious mythology was either that of a demon or the *vāhana* of death god Yama. That it was some deep-rooted prejudice, shared equally by brahmanical as well as heterodox orders, may be apparent from the fact that instead of cattle in general or cow in particular, it is only buffalo which is specifically listed in the *Milindapañho* amongst the non-acceptable gift-items for monks.[4] Perhaps it was the extreme usefulness of the buffalo which made it difficult for the donors to spare it easily as gift. Significantly in the *Mahābhārata*, buffalo along with a boar constitute the two items to be gifted not by some human being but by a demon (*rākṣasa*).[5]

Horse: Although references contained in the Epics to gift of horses are fairly numerous as compared to gift of kine, the practice of gifting horses appears to be decidedly less common. That it soon ceased to enjoy full social approbation would be apparent from the following verse of the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*, "Varuṇa indeed seizes him (i.e. he

[1]D.D. Kosambi, *An Intro.*, p. 138.

[2]S.K. Das, 'A Study of Folk-cattle Rites', *MI*, XXX, 1953, p. 239.

[3]R.S. Sharma, 'Forms of Property', *EHS*, p. 95. So intimate was the acquaintance of the Vedic people with the kine that when they came across buffalo in India they called it '*govala*'.

[4]*Milinda.*, IV.8.7.

[5]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 86.21.

suffers from dropsy) who accepts the gift of a horse."[1] By the beginning of the post-Vedic period the practice was tending to become almost rare and horses are scarcely ever known to have been gifted in very large numbers. References contained in the *Vessantara Jātaka* to the gift of seven hundred horses by prince Vessantara actually appears to be more an exception aimed especially to emphasise the extremeness of the munificent act rather than the common practice itself.[2] In the *Dharmasūtras* it is mostly gift of a single horse and only rarely of a pair or more is advocated, while in the *Gautama Dharmasūtra*, horse is mentioned among objects that are to be gifted by way of penance for sin.[3]

Reason for difference in the popularity wielded by horse as gift-object in contrast to cattle may be attributed to the important functions it performed in the changing economic and military context. The literary data thus reveals how the Vedic Āryans had all along been domesticating horses, which had not only added to their mobility in the early nomadic phase but proved to be enormously useful as a means of transport and for purposes of warfare, the two chief activities in which they were mostly engaged.

However, in the wake of rapid specialisation with the task of fighting being increasingly entrusted to a small group within the tribe, usefulness of horses, especially in the absence of extensive commercial traffic, must have been considerably affected. Moreover it would also be worth considering whether S.D. Dogra's contention that horse was not used for riding till a fairly late date[4] also had some bearing, at least initially, on the limited utility which horses wielded both for the purpose of warfare and transport. If the suggestion at all holds good then horses could not have possessed much exchange value and their gift in large numbers might have proved more cumbersome than welcome to the brāhmaṇa donee. The greater care and effort which horse-rearing in contrast to cattle-rearing calls forth

[1]*Tai. Saṁ.*, II. 3.12.1. Vide, P.V. Kane, *Hist. Dh. S.*, vol. II, pt. II, p. 839; also quoted in *Mimāṁsā Sūtra* of Jaimini, III. 4.28. *varuṇo va evam grhaṇāti yaśvam pratigrhṇāti, SBH*, vol. XXVII, pt. I.

[2]*Vessantara Jāt.*, vol. VI, no. 547, p. 261.

[3]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, XIX. 16.

[4]S.D. Dogra, 'Horse in Ancient India', *JOIB*, XXIII, 1973. Horse was however, not yet used for riding. Only once do we hear of the riding of the horses in the *Ṛgveda*, V. 61-2 and then it is described in such a way as to indicate that it was exceptional.

might have, perhaps further made horse-keeping a relatively expensive proposition. Thus in the *Mahābhārata* we get references to horses of superior breed being brought all the way from Kamboja.[1] In view of their limited economic utility in the self-sufficient economy of the period preceding that of the Buddha (and specially with the available evidence not proving the contrary), it may perhaps be assumed that horses were not only primarily owned by those engaged in military activities, but even their number unlike that of cattle could not have been inordinately large.

In the epics, nevertheless, we still come across references to gift of horses in very large numbers. Apparent incongruity of the phenomenon would certainly be difficult to explain unless, conceding the essentially hyperbolic content of these references, they may be regarded as reflecting the natural desire on the part of grateful and appreciative royal donors to confer a little of their own regalia upon their ministrant priests as well. This is specially evident in the case of the gift of elephants to learned brāhmaṇas and priests.[2]

Inclusion of horses and elephants in unduly large numbers in the list of gift-items occurring in the Epics, may perhaps also be explained as an attempt to cast these royal gifts in a heroic mould, which was in accord with the martial spirit of the age. Such gifts moreover would have flattered the projected image of the royal patron, for gift of a certain number of horses or elephants would automatically bespeak possession of so many more horses by the donor.

None the less, our sources leave us in no doubt that the practice of gifting horses was far more common in the period prior to the age of the Buddha than that following it. This shift may perhaps be attributed to the changed geographical scene as well as the altered politico-economic situation. It was the shift in geographical scene of Āryan activity from the north-western to the eastern regions which directly affected the popularity of horses and elephants as gift-items. As the *Kātyāyana Śrautasūtra* informs us, while horses were more plentiful in the western region (*udīcyeṣu*), elephants were found in greater abundance in the eastern regions (*prāchyeṣu-hastinaḥ*).[3] According to the Epics also the noted regions for horses were Gandhāra, Tukhāra, Kamboja, Bāhlika and Sindh.[4]

[1]*Mbh.*, Sabhā Parva, 47.3-4.

[2]*Kāt. Śr. Sūt.*, XXII. 2.24-25.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Balram Srivastava, *Trade and Commerce in Ancient India*, p. 228.

Kauṭilya also mentions Kamboja, Sindhu, Āratta, Vāhlika, Sauvira as the regions which were noted for horses.[1]

Significantly, in the earlier period horses were predominantly owned by host of smaller chiefs and rulers who, unable to maintain them in too large a number, may have found it more worthwhile to spare them as gift-items. But in the later period, with the emergence of big territorial kingdoms based on a centrally organised military system and also with the extension of trade and commerce, ownership of horses naturally must have become more diffused. To meet the demands of growing commercial traffic, horses in increasing numbers were now used to draw all kinds of vehicles, chariots, carts etc. which on account of improved iron technology must have become considerably improved in design and technical efficiency. That horses were fast turning into a commodity in great demand would be evident from the reference to horse-dealers or *assavaṇija* contained in one of the *Jātakas*[2] and the *Aṣṭādhyāyi*.[3] We learn that horses were owned by caravan leaders, merchants and big estate-owners. Hence the numerical strength of individually owned horses could not have been sufficiently large to enable their owners to easily spare them by way of gift. However, some references to the gift of carts (*śakaṭa*) or chariots yoked with horses are forthcoming. Similarly the fact that dealing in horses was a condemned profession for the brāhmaṇas[4] might suggest that the latter were getting horses in gift which they might have been tempted to dispose of through sale.

Slave: With regard to slaves as items of gift, it is noteworthy how in the early half of the first millennium B.C. not only such gifts were invariably made by princely donors but there is also evident a preponderance of the gift of women slaves over that of men slaves. Both the facts are significant. While highlighting the redundant character of men slaves as item of property in a primarily pastoral order,[5] they at the same time bring out the greater importance of women slaves for the purpose of augmenting the fast depleting tribal population

[1] *AŚ*, II.30.

[2] *Kuṇḍaka-Kucchi Sindhava Jāt*, vol. II, no. 254, p. 200. Five hundred people of that country (northern province) horse-dealers, used to convey horses to Benares and sell them there.

[3] *AA.*, VI.2.136.

[4] S.C. Banerji, *Dharmasūtras: A Study in their Origin and Development*, p. 215.

[5] *ERE*, vol. XI, p. 598.

due to perpetual inter-tribal warfare.[1] They make it clear that war must have been the major source of requisitioning slave labour, since only that may explain the concentration of slaves mainly in the hands of tribal chiefs. No matter how exaggerated are the reports pertaining to the numerical strength of slaves gifted by these kings and chiefs, it would still appear that the frequent wars which the latter fought and the rich tribute they received from vanquished chiefs must have greatly enhanced the number of slaves they owned, perhaps much larger than they could maintain under the existing incipient character of agrarian economy. Thus from the Sabhā Parva of the *Mahābhārata* we learn how on the occasion of his consecration as king, Yudhiṣṭhira received from the subordinate chiefs as many as hundred thousand slave-girls bedecked with gold ornaments.[2] The Kirātas alone had offered ten thousand women of their tribe accompanied by ten thousand women slaves.[3] It was probably to solve the problem of an overflowing harem that chiefs made gifts of maidens or women slaves in extremely large numbers. Thus, referring to the large number of slave-girls received by Yudhiṣṭhira in the form of gifts. D.R. Chanana points out: "It is therefore quite in order to find that this king maintained eighty-eight thousand *snātakas* and had deputed three women slaves at the service of each of them."[4]

But in contrast to the gift of cattle the gift of women slaves, especially in very large numbers, must have posed considerable problem for the donee since not only those slaves would have wielded relatively less exchange value and economic utility in a pastoral set-up but also must have required a big household establishment and enough means on the part of the donee to provide for their upkeep. The gift of maidens to learned brāhmaṇas and priests would, therefore, point to the wealthy status of both the donor and the donee. But what specially underlines the luxury character of these slaves as gift-items was the fact that they are at times pointedly described as possessing great beauty[5] which would strongly suggest that as inmate of the harem they were primarily meant for the donee's pleasure.

[1] R.S. Sharma, 'Conflict, Distribution and Differentiation', *pro. IHC*, 1977, p. 179.

[2] *Mbh.*, Sabhā Parva, 47.7.

[3] D.R. Chanana, *Slavery in Ancient India*, p. 127; *Mbh.*, Sabhā Parva, 48.39-40.

[4] *Mbh.*, Sabhā Parva, 48.10.

[5] *Mbh.*, Āśramavāsika Parva, 20.4; Sabhā Parva, 47-7; Anuśāsana Parva, 106-12.

In the wake of economic specialisation and the growing rigidity of *varṇa* considerations during the post-Vedic period there seems a relative decline in the social status enjoyed by these slaves in the harem of kings and chiefs. This may be specially evident from the emphasis laid on slaves being highborn as is done in the *Vessantara Jātaka.*[1] Thus although frequent references to *nāṭaka-itthis* in very large number are available from the Pāli texts yet women slaves are found to be serving more in the capacity of personal attendants or menial servants of queens and princesses. Apparently by the post-Vedic period slaves were the chief form of domestic labour available. Consequently they seem to have been much in demand and even common householders such as the brāhmaṇa of the *Vessantara Jātaka*, seem to be owning them.[2] With the coming of market economy, war and gifts no longer constituted the two exclusive means of acquiring slaves. Now we hear of slaves being acquired even through debt or sale,[3] which alone may account for rich *seṭṭhis, gahapatis* and even courtesans[4] owning slaves in large numbers at this time. Though gift of women slaves was much coveted and Kauṭilya specially advocates it in favour of the brāhmaṇas,[5] actual instances of gift of slaves in large numbers during the post-Vedic period are more an exception than the general practice.

The gift of men slaves, although not much heard of in a pastoral society, (for their existence is essentially a characteristic of class society) must have increased considerably in the subsequent period of agricultural expansion when slave labour was required both for the clearance of jungles and for working on the fields.[6] Utilisation of slave labour for agricultural purposes on a very extensive scale, however, is not borne out by our sources.[7] The more common category of slaves met with in the Indian sources is the domestic slave.[8] Perhaps the reason why slave labour could not be exploited much either for craft or agricultural production seems to be that

[1] *Vessantara Jāt.*, vol. VI, no. 547, p. 261.
[2] Ibid., pp. 271-72.
[3] D.R. Chanana, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
[4] *Kanavera Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 318, p. 40. ref. to Sāmā, a courtesan of Benares, who had a suite of five hundred female slaves.
[5] *AŚ*, VI. 16.6.
[6] D.R. Chanana, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
[7] D.D. Kosambi, *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India*, p. 101.
[8] R.S. Sharma, *Śūdras in Ancient India*, p. 283.

whereas in the former case craftsmen were unwilling to reveal to outsiders their trade secrets, in the latter case it must have been far more economical to engage waged labour for temporary help at the peak of harvest-season than maintain slaves under strict supervision all the year round.[1] None the less as maintained by Bongard Levin, the available sources warrant the conclusion that slave labour was employed in the main spheres of economic activity in ancient India.[2] Even though not many notices of gift of slaves are forthcoming especially from Mauryan period onwards, the textual allusions to rich brāhmaṇas owning slaves might indicate their original acquisition through gifts. Such a supposition would be specially strengthened by the *Dharmasūtra* injunction, which expressly forbids the brāhmaṇas to trade in human beings.[3] They could, however, exchange slaves for slave.[4] The relative absence of any important recorded instance of gift of slaves during the post-Mauryan period would suggest the enhanced utility of slave-labour for the owner especially for domestic purposes. Apparently slaves as an item of property could no longer be easily spared. Moreover, the legislative rules, drafted under the strong humanising influence of the heterodox religions by granting greater rights to the slaves[5] specially with regard to manumission[6] and property-holdings[7] indirectly augmented state control over one of the important means of production. They also rendered slave ownership more hazardous. Such a development may have further detracted from the popularity of slaves as gift-objects. Thus the waxing and waning popularity of slaves as gift-items besides being conditioned by their relevance to contemporary material milieu may also be attributed to their being possessed in surplus numbers by the donors and their relative inability to maintain them in the pre-Buddhist period.

Agriculture Based Economy and Gift-Articles

The next group of items to wield importance as gift-objects from

[1] B.M. Bongard Levin, 'Some Problems', *HS*, pp. 210-11.
[2] Ibid., p. 209.
[3] *Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, I.7.20, 11-12.
[4] Ibid., I.7.20; *Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, 11.39.
[5] *Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, II.4-9, 10-11, At his pleasure he may stint his wife or his children, but by no means a slave who does his work. D.R. Chanana, op. cit., pp. 89, 113.
[6] *AŚ*, III. 13.9.
[7] *Manu*, IX. 179; *Yāj. Smr.*, VIII. 13.4, *AŚ.*, III.13.14; 22.

the sixth century B.C., when agrarian economy had already made marked headway, comprised foodgrains, dairy-products, precious metals, villages, forest produce, means of irrigation such as lakes, tanks and wells.

Grain: The growing practice of making gifts of agricultural produce, which is so much in evidence from post-Vedic period onwards,[1] could have resulted primarily from its availability with the donor in such abundant quantity as to be easily spared by him. That in the wake of the widespread use of iron, agricultural expansion had already made much progress[2] would be evident from the unprecedented variety of food crops mentioned by Kātyāyana[3] and Pāṇini.[4] Contemporary Greek writers also appear to have been struck by the richness of this country's soil and also by its overall prosperity in agricultural produce and other raw materials.[5]

Although production and availability of foodgrain in surplus quantities during this period is definitely proved, yet it is difficult to tell whether the means of storage known at this time, to which Pāṇini makes specific reference, were also available in adequate measure to meet the needs of an individual cultivator. In fact, it does not seem unlikely that it was primarily the difficulty of transporting surplus grain to the market as well as that of storage and protection against the menace of rodents and pests which made the peasant donor more readily inclined to share or gift some of the stored grain. It was perhaps for this reason that instead of longer lasting items of property such as cattle it was agricultural produce which during the age of the Buddha figured as a popular gift-item specially within the rural complex. Such an inference would be amply borne out by the fact that early brahmanical lawgivers such as Baudhāyana, whose rural bias is much too evident,[6] while forbidding the acceptance of cooked food by brāhmaṇas fully approve and recommend the acceptance of uncooked cereals (*anna*) by them.[7]

[1] *Rāmā.*, Ayodhyākāṇḍa, 52.

[2] Radhakrishna Choudhury, 'Iron and Urbanisation in Ancient India', *JBPP*, I, 1977.

[3] K P. Singh, *A Critical Study of the Kātyāyana Śrauta Sūtra*, p. 153.

[4] *AA*, IV.1.42; V.3.89.

[5] McCrindle, *Ancient India*, pp. 44, 113.

[6] A. Ghosh, *CEHI*, p. 53.

[7] *Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, II.3.6.33; I.3.5.9; *Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, 1.2.7.21; *Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, XIX.16.

Amongst the various kinds of cereals it was chiefly different qualities of rice, barley and millet which figure as gift-items in the post-Vedic literature. By comparison references to the gift of wheat or even pulses, are very few. The fact is significant. Besides reflecting dietary habits of the people, it also indicates that the epicentre of brahmanical culture at this time was in a rice-producing area, viz eastern U.P. and Bihar.

Sesamum: Certain grain items such as sesamum (*tila*) appear to carry special significance as gift-object. Thus it would be found that a somewhat paradoxical attitude of approval and disapproval seems to have existed with regard to the sale and gift of sesamum. Interestingly, while its gift was advocated, especially as funeral and *śrādha* offerings to the manes and it held great ritual significance,[1] yet not only was its sale condemned but even those trafficking in it were held in low social esteem.[2] According to Baudhāyana: "He who sells sesamum for sooth sells his ancestors."[3] The *Manusmṛti* contains a similar warning: "If he applies sesamum to any other purpose but food, anointing and charitable gifts, he will be born again as a worm."[4] That such superstitious belief actually permeated the life and thought of the people would be evident from the fact that the profession of oil-pressing, howsoever lucrative it might have been, could never beget for the oil-presser a high social status.

Perhaps what might explain this strange attitude towards sesamum may be the fact that the Āryans came into contact with it at a much later date. This would be evident from the virtual absence of all references to it in the *Vedas* except for one solitary reference contained in the *Atharvaveda*.[5] Its hoary antecedents and associations with the primitive land and culture of India on the other hand seem to be acknowledged in a verse of the *Mahābhārata* which describes sesamum as having been created by the self-existent one, as the first food of the manes for which reason by its gift the ancestors are pleased.[6]

Even later on when sesamum began to be produced and used for dietary purposes on a more extensive scale, the mixed feeling in which

[1] D.D. Kosambi, *An Intro.*, p. 137.

[2] *Manu*, IV. 85. One oil press is as bad as ten slaughter houses.

[3] *Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, II. 1.2.27.

[4] *Manu*, X. 91.

[5] *AV*, I. 7.2.

[6] *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 65.6.

it was held earlier, continued to linger and invested it with a semi-ritualistic aura. The strange taboo with regard to the sale and purchase of sesamum and its by-products would seem to be echoed even in the widely held belief today that while the gift of edible oil (*taila*- derived from the word *tila* or sesamum) is auspicious on Saturdays, it must never be purchased or brought home that day.

Garlic: Our data, moreover, reveals that certain uncooked food items were gifted only to a special category of donees. Notices of the gift of garlic are thus contained chiefly in Pāli texts. The *Suvaṇṇa Haṁsa Jātaka* narrates how a lay brother at Sāvatthi had offered the sisterhood a supply of garlic. Later arrangements were made by which each sister was to receive two or three handfuls of garlics.[1] That it was no chance omission on the part of brahmanical authors would be evident from the *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*, according to which red garlic and onions were not to be eaten.[2] Manu is more explicit in expressing his disapproval when he states that garlic, turnip, onion and mushroom are unfit to be eaten by brāhmaṇas since they have originated from impurities.[3] Disapproval of the gift of garlic may hence be taken to merely reflect the prevailing dietary habits and prejudices with regard to certain items of food peculiar to different sections of society. Judging by the present-day beliefs, garlic and onion are still considered by tradition-bound Hindus as possessing *tāmasika* quality. It is, however, equally probable that compared to the brāhmaṇas monks may have been receiving gifts on a more elementary level. But even in some of the heterodox Pāli texts such as the *Cullavagga* onion is prescribed to be taken only in medicinal form.[4]

Dairy-products: Milk and its by-products as gift-items enjoyed a universal and consistent popularity throughout the period under study. But they appear to have been specially favoured by the brahmanical lawgivers;[5] a fact which indicates the pastoral bias of the brahmanical social order. It also suggests that despite the superimposition of the urban structure, the society in general continued to be dominantly agrarian in character.

[1]*Suvanna Haṁsa Jāt*. vol. I, no. 136, p. 292.
[2]*Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, I.5.17.96; 28.
[3]*Manu*, V.5.
[4]*CV*, V.34.2.
[5]*Rāmā.*, Ayodhyākāṇḍa, III.14, 15; *Mbh.*, Aśvamedhika Parva, 87.12; *Manu*, IV.250; XI.134; *Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, XIX.16; XXII.24.

Precious metals: Precious metals such as gold and silver in bullion or in the form of necklace (*niṣka*) had from the earliest Vedic times figured as popular gift-items.[1] Their popularity however increased manifold in the ensuing period when they began to be gifted in the form of coins, ornaments, vessels, gold embroidered garments, even pillars and other furnishings.[2] During the post-Mauryan period increased use of precious metals may be attributed to the increased quantity of gold made available through trade with the Roman Empire.[3] But its popularity in pre-Mauryan and Mauryan times is difficult to explain. Our data, in fact, is reticent about the specific source from which the metal was drawn. The story of gold-digging ants contained in the *Mahābhārata*[4] as well as references to gold-dust of India made by classical writers[5] may, however, suggest that some quantity of gold was collected from river washings.[6] The simple gold-processing technique employed by Indians perhaps finds an allusion in Megasthanes' statement that gold was being sold to Indians in its natural state, because it did not require to be purified.[7] How far this spurt in the gift of gold-objects was due to improved technology in gold processing is a matter of speculation. The fact that throughout the vast extent of the Persian empire, India was the only satrapy that paid its tribute in gold while the rest paid in silver would point to the adequate availability of gold in India. According to Cunningham: "India, in fact, produced little or no silver, while gold was abundant.[8]

The available evidence, however, would still not warrant the assumption that it was surplus quantum of gold which enabled the donors to gift objects made of gold. In fact, precious metals were invariably a scarce commodity, always in great demand. Hence their use as gift-items in spite of their scarcity would only suggest existence of some rigid social mores or ritual based religious dictates which acted as

[1]*RV*, I.126.2; *AV*, XX.127.3; *Gop. Br.*, I.3.6, vide, S.K. Maity, *EICCS*, p. 19.
[2]*Mbh.*, Aśvamedhika Parva, LXXXIX; *Dh. Pada*, Bk. 25, Story 12.
[3]K.A.N. Sastri, *CHI*, vol. II, p. 435.
[4]*Mbh.*, Sabhā Parva, 48.4.
[5]Herodotus describes the Indian gold as gathered from the sands of Paktuika. III.102, vide, A. Cunningham, *Coins of Ancient India*, p. 5.
[6]K.A.N. Sastri, *CHI*, vol. II, p. 435.
[7]Strabo, XV.1.44. quoted in Cunningham, op. cit., p. 5.
[8]Cunningham, op. cit., p. 5.

strong moral inducement to make a person part with the precious commodity. Since our data shows that gift of gold articles were generally made either on a ceremonial occasion[1] or as a part of sacrificial fee (dakṣiṇā)[2] or by way of fine for some moral or ritual default,[3] it would be safe to assume that strong social or ritual compulsions must have worked behind the popularisation of gold as gift-item. Incidentally contemporary notices of actual instances of gift of gold articles as compared to the numerous occasions on which its gift is recommended in the brahmanical texts are very few. Perhaps this was quite natural. Gold being the most lasting and precious giftable item with permanent exchange value was bound to be coveted much more than any other commodity by the donee, who in this case were the sacerdotal class of brāhmaṇas.

Silver (*rūpyam, rajatam*) as a gift-item on the other hand, although known to our sources from the time of the Vedas,[4] was not so popular. Some of the earlier texts, in fact, seem to hold the gift of silver in slight disapprobation. In the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* the belief is expressed that if anybody offers a gift of silver then within a year some calamity befalls him.[5] In the subsequent period also, though its gift is advocated by lawgivers,[6] yet not only there are fewer references containing notices of such recommendation (even these being invariably bracketed with that of gold), but silver is also never made the subject of the same fulsome praise which we find lavished upon gold as gift-item.[7] It is interesting to note that Jaimini in a description of sacrificial products, mentions how the sacrificer touches the *garhapatya* hearth and places gold pieces to the north, while pieces of silver are given to an ignorant brāhmaṇa.[8]

In the *Mahābhārata*, special sections are devoted to the origin[9] and

[1] *Rāmā.*, Ayodhyākāṇḍa, 77; Yuddhakāṇḍa, 130.

[2] *Sāṅk. Gṛ. Sūt.*, V.3.5; *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 73.7.9 *Suvarṇam paramaṃ dānaṃ suvarṇaṃ dakṣiṇā parā.*

[3] *Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, XIX.17; XX.13; *Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, III.10; *Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, XVIII.16.

[4] Vide, Upendra Thakur, op. cit., p. 30.

[5] *Tai. Saṁ.*, I. 5.1, vide, R.N. Sharma, *Brahmins*, p. 44.

[6] *Baud, Dh. Sūt.*, I.4.10; *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 61.20; *Manu*, IV.230; III. 202. Water reverentially offered to the manes in a silver vessel or adorned with silver produces infinite satisfaction.

[7] *Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, XXVIII. 16. 'Gold is the first born of Fire.'

[8] *The Mimaṁsa Sutrās of Jaimini*, *SBH*, vol. XXVIII, Intro., p. ciii.

[9] *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 83, *Suvarṇotpatti*; Anuśāsana Parva, 84, 85.

praise[1] of gold as gift-items, but notices of the gift of silver are comparatively very few. The only explanation for this phenomenon could be that besides being a relatively scarce commodity,[2] silver perhaps due to some former prejudice, as hinted in the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*[3] could not be imbued with the same amount of ritualistic efficacy or sanctity with which gold had come to be associated. Significantly it was the sacrosanct character of gold and not that of silver which was emphasised time and again in the brahmanical texts.[4] Thus in the *Mahābhārata* it is gold which is described as the greatest object of gift, the best fee, the most sanctifying among the sanctifying.[5]

Village: The increasing tendency on the part of kings during pre-Mauryan period to make gifts of villages more than agricultural fields was perhaps a natural phenomenon symptomatic of the still rather dubious ownership right exercised by them over their territorial possessions. Thus the need for actual transference of property rights, which would be absolutely essential in the case of land-grants, would not arise to the same extent in the case of village-grants. Gift of a village, instead of entailing actual relinquishment of the King's right of ownership which had still not been too firmly established, merely involved the bestowal of the king's unquestioned right to collect revenue from that village[6] upon the donee. As Bongard Levin points out: "What is meant by 'donation' is merely the transfer of the right to collect the tax from the village and not the right to the land as such."[7] Some later inscriptions explicitly state that the taxes which the villagers had earlier paid to the state were now to be paid to the brāhmaṇa recipients of the village grant. That gift of a village would have signified only grant of the right of collection would be apparent from the *Nānacchanda Jātaka*. It tells the story of a brāhmaṇa who wanted to have the revenue of a village as his boon.[8]

Forest-products: Linkage of gift-objects with the changing topography of a region is especially evident in the case of forest products. It is remarkable how in the early post-Vedic period when agricultural

[1] *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 64, *Kaṁcanādidānaṃ.*

[2] Cunningham, op. cit, p. 5.

[3] *Tai. Saṁ.*, I.5.1.

[4] *Manu*, II.239. 'One should accept gold even from the impure.'

[5] *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 73.9. '*Suvarṇaṃ pāvanaṃ. sakra pāvanānāṃ. paraṃ.*'

[6] G.M. Bongard Levin, 'Some Problems', *HS*, p. 216.

[7] Ibid., pp. 216-17.

[8] *Nānacchanda Jāt.*, vol. II, no. 289, p. 291.

expansion through a swift process of deforestation was taking place, except cattle, slaves and horses, most of the other gift-items such as objects made of skins (*cammakhaṇḍan*), bones (*aṭṭhimayam*), horns of wild-animals (*visāṇamayam*), peacock-feathers, ivory (*dantamayam*), lac (*jātymayam*), bamboo (*velumayam*), also sandal or ordinary wood (*darubhāṇḍam*), roots and herbs, fuel wood were primarily forest products.[1] Understandably most of the finished items of daily use at this time, such as furniture, vehicles, looms even houses and buildings, were fashioned out of wood. This extensive dependence on wood indicates not only wood-cutting on a massive scale but also the continued presence of big forests in and around the region of the Gangetic plain, a fact which is well borne out by the available data. As B.C. Law observes: "Some natural forests (*sayamjātavana*) existed in the middle country (*Madhya deśa*) in the sixth century B.C. The Kurujangala for instance was a wild region in the Kuru realm, which extended as far north as the Kamyaka forest. The Anjanavana at Sāketa, the Mahāvana at Vaiśālī, and the Mahāvana at Kapilavastu were natural forests the Pārileyyakavana was an elephant forest at some distance from Kausambi and on the way to Śrāvasti. The Lumbinivana situated on the bank of the Rohini river was also a natural forest. The Nāgavana in the Vajji kingdom, Śālvana of the Mallas at Kuṣiñarā, the Bhesakalāvana in the Bharga kingdom, the Siṁsapāvana at Kauśāmbi, the one to the north of Setavyā in Kośala, the one near Ālavi and the Pipphalivana of the Moriyas may be cited as typical instances of natural forests."[2] The *Aṣṭādhyāyi* of Pāṇini also contains the names of numerous forests such as Puragāvana, Miśrakāvana, Sidhrkā, Sārikā, Koṭarā, Agrevana, many of which have still not been properly identified.[3]

From the post-Mauryan period onward we notice a conspicuous change in the basic nature of popular gift-items suggesting a considerable decline both in the dependence on forest-products as well as in forest land. It might suggest the clearance of jungles on an extensive scale, through the wider use of better quality iron tools and implements.[4] That the thick forests of the earlier period were being

[1]*AŚ*, II.17.4.16; contains a detailed list of items categorised as forest produce.

[2]B.C. Law, *Historical Geography of Ancient India*, pp. 40-41.

[3]*AA*, VII.4.4.5; VI.3.117; vide V.S. Agarwala, *India as Known to Pāṇini*, p. 41.

[4]D.P. Agarwal, *Copper Bronze Age in India*, p. 227.

fast replaced by agricultural fields, artificially developed parks, gardens, fruit-groves etc. which dominated the new topography can also be inferred from the more popular inflexion acquired by the term *vana*. It now came to denote not necessarily natural forests and woodlands but more often orchards and parks. The use of the appellation *vana* in the case of Ambavana, Jetavana, Ambapālivana can be justified only in this special sense.[1] Although Kauṭilya devotes a whole section of the *Arthaśāstra* to the subject of forest produce and the preservation of forests in general,[2] yet his injunction with regard to acculturation of virgin land would to some extent suggest processes of deforestation at work during this period.[3] This would also be affirmed by the stipulation made by Vaśiṣṭha that the king may injure trees that bear fruits or flowers in order to extend cultivation and for sacrifices.[4]

Construction of lakes, tanks, wells and parks: From the age of the Buddha there is evident a rise in the number of public welfare works undertaken by individual benefactors. Lakes, wells, and tanks essentially characterise an agriculture dominated topography more than a pastoral economic order. The construction of lakes in large numbers in a particular region reflects growing dependence on artificial means of irrigation for agriculture. Wells and tanks on the other hand form very much a part of the pre-industrial urban landscape. Perhaps developments in the field of iron technology during the NBP cultural phase made digging of wells and tanks easier and faster.

It is not surprising therefore that in the expanding agricultural milieu of the post-Vedic period, both brahmanical and heterodox writers recommend the dedication of wells and tanks as charitable acts yielding great spiritual merit. The *Dharmasūtra* writers classify it under the *pūrta* category of dāna. The *Mahābhārata* lauds a person who "digs wells, constructs shelter whence pure and cool water is distributed, excavates tanks".[5] Similarly in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* those people are praised who plant groves, build causeways, construct wells and watering sheds.[6] Post-Mauryan epigraphs[7] are replete with refe-

[1]B.C. Law, *Geography of Early Buddhism*, p. 44.

[2]*AŚ*, II. 17.

[3]Ibid., II.1-2.

[4]*Vaś. Dh. Sūt.*, XIX. 12.

[5]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 145, tr. p. 310.

[6]*Saṁ Nik.*, vol. I, V.7, tr. p. 46.

[7]Nasik Cave Ins., *SI*, vol. II, Bk. I, no. 59, p. 169.

rences to such works of public benefaction undertaken specially by rich merchants and commercial magnates. The Mathura stone inscription of the time of Soḍāṣa records the dedication of a tank (*udapanah*), a grove (*ārāma*), a pillar (*stambha*) and a stone slab (*śīlapaṭṭa*) by the treasurer of Soḍāṣa.[1]

The growing importance of the practice of dedicating tanks can be made out also from the numerous votive tanks discovered during the course of excavations at Kuṣāṇa urban sites. The deposition of votive tanks would clearly show that the belief in the spiritual merit which the gift of tank was expected to produce had become so strong that all those who could not afford to build and donate an actual tank perhaps substituted it by a votive tank.

The recommendation of tree plantation as a charitable act yielding spiritual merit clearly bespeaks an economic stage when not only deforestation had gone far but also the growing volume of highway traffic necessitated the planting of shady trees along both sides of the road. Besides Aśokas' edicts, several post-Mauryan inscriptions also refer to the gift of trees.[2]

Land: Agricultural land as compared to villages figured rarely as an item of gift in the pre-Mauryan literature. The difference apparent in their relative popularity can be explained only by relating them to the contemporary material milieu. Gift of land at this stage of economic development, in fact, would not have signified much. Not only was there an abundance of forest or wasteland at this time but land was actually believed to belong to one, who made it arable. That the theory persisted right up to the beginning of the Christian era would be apparent not only from the argument put forth in the *Milindapañho*[3] but also from Manu's dictum: "Land belongs to him who first clears it, as does the buck to him who gets in the first dart."[4] Even Kauṭilya lays down that 'unarable fields should not be taken away from those who are making them arable.'[5]

[1]Mathura Stone Ins. of Soḍāsa, ibid., no. 26, p. 121.

[2]Panjtar Stone Ins. of a Kuṣāṇa King, *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 32, 'And therein my gift are two trees.'; Hāthigumpha Cave Ins. of Khāravela, *Ep. Ind.*, vol. XX, no. 7, pp. 87-88. 'He gives with foliage Kalpa,' *pallava kalpa vṛkṣa*; Nasik Cave Ins., *SI.*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 58, p. 164.

[3]*Milinda.*, IV.4.15. 'And it is as when a man clears away the jungles and sets free (*niharati*) a piece of land, and the people use the phrase 'that is his land'; it is because he has brought the land into use that he is called the owner of land.'

[4]*Manu*, IX.44.

[5]*AŚ*, II.1.9.

Gift of mostly forest and waste-land in the earlier period: Interestingly, in the earlier brahmanical texts no categorical stipulation concerning gifted land being cultivated or uncultivated is made. Thus while in the *Rāmāyaṇa* we get reference to a great monarch giving large portions of the earth in charity to the officiating priests,[1] the *Mahābhārata* alludes to hundreds of brāhmaṇas possessing wealth of kine and living upon the lands that Yudhiṣṭhira had given them.[2] Similarly Baudhāyana,[3] Āpastamba[4] and Vasiṣṭha[5] recommend the gift of land without specifying its nature. In view of the natural paucity of cultivated fields, atleast in the earlier period, the gift of mostly virgin land may be presumed. Thus from the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*[6] we learn how a Bhārdvāja brāhmaṇa was having timber work done in the forest. Gift of forest land to sages and brāhmaṇa teachers would have been even otherwise ideal for the purpose of building hermitages. Kauṭilya, in fact, specifically lays down: "The king should grant to ascetics wildernesses for Vedic study and Soma sacrifices."[7] Sometimes, as the *Jayaddisa Jātaka* would suggest, the royal donor himself took the initiative in getting the land prepared for cultivation and even in establishing settlements for the benefit of the donee.[8]

In some ways the gift of waste land in the age of the Buddha could not have been at all welcome to brāhmaṇa donees possessing scant resources. It, however, would have proved highly beneficial to the state itself. Grant of wasteland instead of agricultural fields would have automatically led to the territorial extension of state authority. It would have also prevented permanent alienation of state-revenue. Moreover, since brāhmaṇas on account of their spiritual eminence could be expected to wield maximum influence over native population, the process of acculturation might have been rendered faster.

It must have been at the cost of state interests therefore that brāhmaṇa theorists of the later period began to advocate the gift of

[1]*Rāmā.*, Bālakāṇḍa, 14, tr. p. 35.

[2]*Mbh.*, Sabhā Parva, 47, tr. vol. II, p. 114.

[3]*Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, IV.7.9.

[4]*Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, II.10.26.1.

[5]*Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, XXVII.16.17.

[6]*Saṁ. Nik.*, VII.2.7.

[7]*AŚ.*, II.2.2.

[8]*Jayaddisa Jāt.*, vol. V, no. 513, p. 19.

only cultivated land to learned brāhmaṇas. In the later didactic section of the *Mahābhārata* it is categorically stated: "one should never give away earth that is barren or that is burnt (arid)".[1] In another passage of the same text it is considered specially meritorious to make unto brāhmaṇas a gift of earth which has been tilled or sown with seeds or which contains standing crop.[2] Even Kauṭilya, who is otherwise such a staunch protagonist of the state, would appear to approve of the gift of cultivated land to learned brāhmaṇas, since he specifically states that the land should be granted tax-free.[3] That gift of cultivated field was becoming relatively more common by the post-Mauryan period would be apparent from references to gift of fields contained in such Pāli texts as the *Mahāvagga*[4] and *Milindapañho*.[5]

Moreover, not only just agricultural fields but gift of land for residential purposes also became more common at this time.[6] All monastic establishments were raised on such land.

Gift-Items Against Urban Background

In an urban-based economy, increasingly dominated by trade and commodity-production, land, however, could gain only limited popularity confined chiefly to royal donors. Our epigraphic data shows that the other dominant class of donors at this time namely the rich merchants and artisans, although making occasional land-grants, understandably preferred to make gifts more in the form of cooked food, craft-products, installation of votive images, pillars, gateways etc. The more affluent donors even preferred to make gifts in the form of metallic currency or regular interest raised on a sum of money invested with some important craft or mercantile guild.

Cooked Food: Popularity of uncooked food or grain (*anna*) as gift-item seems to have suffered considerably in the later period as the gift of grain would naturally presuppose ownership of agricultural land by the donor as well as the possession of household establish-

[1] *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 65.31. *'na coṣarām na nirdagdhām mahīm dadyāt kathaṁcana.'*

[2] Ibid., Anuśāsana Parva, 61.28. *'halakṛṣṭām mahīm dattvā sabījām saphalāmapi'*; Anuśāsana Parva, 61.78-79.

[3] *AŚ.*, II.1.7.

[4] *MV*, III.1.7.

[5] *Milinda.*, IV.8.7.

[6] *MV*, III.11.3; *Milinda.*, IV.8.7.

ment by the donee. But subsequent developments in the field of urbanisation and heterodox religious movements rendered agricultural landholding on a large scale infeasible within the urban complex; they may have also led to an unprecedented increase in the number of people, who forsaking their hearths and homes began to subsist entirely on alms. Both these simultaneous developments if on the one hand undermined the popularity of uncooked food as a gift-item, on the other they greatly popularised the offering of cooked food in alms.[1]

The acceptance of cooked food by members of heterodox orders, besides suiting their homeless state, was also in clear defiance of the *varṇa*-based brahmanical taboos and restrictions pertaining to commensality. That giftmaking and acceptance of cooked food had come to be regarded in the brahmanical society (as perhaps in all traditional societies) an important means of conferring status would be evident from the space devoted in the *Dharmasūtras* to the subject of approved and forbidden items of cooked food and the donor groupings from whom these could be accepted.[2] The ancient lawgivers, in fact, till a late date continued to frown upon the acceptance of cooked food by brāhmaṇas, thereby perhaps also revealing their prolonged penchant for the pastoral ideal and stubborn rejection of the new urban order.

It was only from the post-Mauryan period onward that they appear to have relented under the pressure of changed material circumstances and allowed the acceptance of cooked food[3], though such permission was hedged with innumerable restrictions. Interestingly, devious reasoning was employed by the lawgivers to vindicate their changed attitude and to circumvent any lurking misgivings. Thus as Āpastamba argues: "If guilt remains fixed on a man (who committed a crime), then the food given by a sinner may be eaten (because the guilt cannot leave the sinner). But if guilt can leave (the sinner, at any time, then food given by the sinner may be eaten because) he becomes pure by the gift (which he makes)".[4]

[1] *Bilāri-kosiya Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 450, p. 43. Said they (the monks we accept nothing that is uncooked. *Vessantara Jāt.*, vol. I, no. 69, p. 167. '. . . folks came to the monastery with a quantity of meal cakes (*piṭṭhakhadāniyam*) for the Brotherhood.'

[2] *Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, I.5.12; *Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, XVII; *Manu.*, V; *Yāj. Smṛ.*, I.161-181.

[3] *Manu.*, X.14. (Uncooked food preferable than cooked food).

[4] *Pāras. Gṛ. Sūt.*, I.2.13; I.17.1; II.2.5; *Āpas. Gṛ. Sūt.*, VI.16.1; *Āśva. Gṛ. Sūt.*, IV.7.1; II.4.16.

Metal-ware: That the problem of storage arising out of possession of surplus had lost its former edge and could no longer affect the popularity of gift-items to the same extent, would be still more evident in the case of metal-ware which figure as common gift-articles in the post-Vedic literature. Metal-craft, in contrast to textile weaving or some other similar crafts, is a highly specialised one requiring technical expertise. This fact alone makes it difficult to assume that the metal goods offered in gift were being manufactured by the donor himself. But once we concede that the donor was specially purchasing the articles for the purpose of gift then the problem of storage affecting the popularity of gift-items automatically loses its relevance.

The increase in the popularity of metal-ware as gift-item may have been partly in response to the unyielding and arbitrary nature of the Dharmaśāstric rules which came to be enforced at this time and partly to meet the needs of heterodox monastic establishments, which had succeeded in gaining wide patronage. These Dharmaśāstric rules, it would be found, were meant to promote the vested interests of the class of donees to which their own authors belonged by providing for their multifarious household requirements.

Strangely enough, amongst the miscellany of metal objects, whereas vessels and other objects made of copper (*lohamayam*),[1] bronze (*kāṁsakam*)[2] bell metal (*lohajam*) and brass (*lohyam*)[3] figure extensively as items of gift, not many gift-articles made of iron (*āyas: śyāma*) are recorded in literature. The only available references are to the use of iron alms bowl (*ayopaṭṭaṃ*) prescribed by the Buddha,[4] and to the gifts of a bar of iron,[5] hundred pegs of iron[6] and a spade of black iron (*abhrim karsavasiṃ*).[7]

The comparative absence of iron objects from the list of popular gift-items would appear to be rather surprising when viewed in the context of recent archaeological findings which prove the profuse availability of Bhar iron[8] during the NBP phase of material culture

[1]*CV*, V.37.1 (*bahuṃ lohabhāṇḍaṃ*).
[2]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva 63.33 (*kāṁsyopadohanaṃ*); *MV*, VI.14.1-2.
[3]*CV*, V.16.2 (*lohavarkaṃ*).
[4]Ibid., V.9.1.
[5]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, XXII.25.
[6]*Gobh. Gr. Sūt.*, IV.8.12.
[7]*Manu*, XI.133.
[8]D.P. Agarwal, *The Copper Bronze Age in India*, p. 227. It was this abundant iron that was responsible for the urbanisation of the Doab in c. 500 BC.

(*c.* 550-100 B.C.).[1] Use of iron alms bowls by bhikkhus affirms the wider use of this metal and may further rule out the possibility that it was the apparent scarcity of iron which led to the rather limited popularity it enjoyed as gift-object.

It is, however, noteworthy that amongst the various iron objects brought to light by NBP archaeological excavations, there is a definite preponderance of tools and weapons; the latter comprising daggers, knives, swords, arrowheads, spearheads, spikes and caltrops. Objects of domestic use include blades, hooks, nails, chisels, drills, axes, lamps, ladles, bowls and rings. Iron had also penetrated the field of agriculture in the form of hoes, choppers, hooks and sickles.[2] The list of iron articles would suggest that it was certainly not the scarcity of the metal but rather the nature of iron goods produced that really accounts for the moderate popularity wielded by iron objects as gift-items. Our list of iron objects comprises mainly weapons and tools. Both these groups of articles, on account of the existing ethical taboos and the nature of economic preoccupation of the donees in general, naturally must have had little use for the donee; and therefore could not have figured as common objects of gift. In brahmanical[3] and Pāli[4] texts the gift of weapons is strongly condemned. This perhaps would further go to prove that strong moral and religious sanctions had by now begun to affect the popularity of certain gift-objects.

The only tools which figure as gift-items in the contemporary literature are spade (mentioned by Manu), or scissors, needles, thimbles, looms etc. All these are connected with cloth weaving and tailoring which the *bhikkhus* were permitted to undertake in order to stitch or weave material for their own robes. The list, besides revealing the limited sphere of economic activities of the donee, also emphasises indirectly their total alienation from the processes of economic production.

Finished goods: Gift of finished goods whether designed out of metal or various other substances is characteristic of a society which has reached a considerable level of commodity production. The popularity of finished products as items of gift would presuppose not only the availability of raw material in abundant measure through either local production or trade, but also a certain amount of craft

[1]Ibid., p. 90.
[2]N.R. Banerjee, *The Iron Age in India*, p. 28.
[3]*Vaś. Dh. Sūt.*, XIII.55. 'A brāhmaṇa shall not accept as gifts weapons, poison and spiritious liquor.'
[4]*Milinda.*, IV.8.7.

specialisation, technological refinement as well as a steady market for these goods.

An analysis of the popularity index of gift-items would show that although gift of some finished goods was known during the age of the Buddha, it was only in the subsequent period that there was a considerable increase in the gift of finished articles. This could have been possible only due to increased production resulting from a more extensive use of iron tools. Moreover, the diversity of finished goods ranging from pieces of furniture,[1] textile goods,[2] metal-ware,[3] footwear[4] (*upahanya*) to pinsers (*sandesan*),[5] perfumes and unguents[6] would tend to reflect the proliferating demands of an urban culture more than the pastoral simplicity of rural life.

Stone artefacts: Construction of *vihāras*, *caityas*, alms-halls as well as dedication of votive images,[7] pillars, gateways and railings in phenomenally large numbers during the post-Mauryan period on the other hand would no doubt attest to the sudden popularity and excellence gained in the field of carpentary, metal-craft, masonry and sculpture. It was characteristically an urban development connected more with the urban based heterodox sects. This would be evident from the fact that none of the principal *Gṛhya* and *Dharma Sūtras* contain any procedure of consecrating an image in a temple. In fact, very few notices of installations of images or construction of pillars and temples dedicated to Brahmanical deities are available for this period. The only recorded instances being the erection of a *pujā* stone wall for bhāgavat Saṁkarṣaṇa and Vasudeva;[8] gift of a temple (*hārmya*) to the goddess of the village;[9] gift of a stone slab in the temple (*sthāna*) of *bhāgavat Nagendra*[10] and the erection of a *garuḍadhvaja* of Vasudeva.[11] This can suggest only one thing that the cult of image or temple worship had

[1] *CV*, VI. 2.4; *Vaś. Dh. Sūt.*, XXIX. 12.

[2] *Dīg. Nik*,, III.1.160 ref. to superfine cloth.; *MV*, VIII. 3.1 ref. to 6 kinds of robes made of linen, cotton, silk, wool, coarse cloth and hampen cloth.

[3] *CV*, V.37.1; *Gobh, Gṛ. Sūt.*, III.2.45.

[4] *Sankha Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 452; *Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, I. 4.10.

[5] *CV*, V.27.5.

[6] *Apannaka Jāt.*, vol. I, no. 1. *bahugandha vilepanān.*

[7] Mathura Jain Image Ins. of Huviṣka, *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 52, *dattā pratimā;* Mathura Bud. Image Ins., ibid., no. 54, *pratimā pratiṣṭhāpitā*,

[8] Besnagar Vaiśnava Column Ins., *Lüd.*, no. 669.

[9] Ghasundi Stone Ins., *Lüd.*, no. 6.

[10] *Lüd.*, no. 23.

[11] Ibid., no. 85.

still not become widely popular within the Brahmanical fold and donations were still directed chiefly towards individual brāhmaṇa recipients. It is for the first time in the *Purāṇas* that much space is devoted to the topic of *devatā pratiṣṭhā*.[1]

The sudden spurt evident in the gift of stone artefacts would suggest the greater availability of not only raw material (yellow and white sandstone) but also of quality tools used by the sculptors of this period. In fact, the efflorescence of the Gandhāra and Mathura schools of sculpture and the simultaneous rise in the popularity of the gift of images, pillars, railings etc. can by no means be treated as a mere coincidence. To a large extent religious endowments were responsible for promoting and enriching the art heritage of our country, especially during Mauryan and post-Mauryan times. If Mauryan art was totally the product of active court patronage, especially in the form of religious munificence displayed by emperor Aśoka, the Gandhāra, Mathura, Sanchi, Amravati art traditions not only lived and flourished due to liberal monetary endowments made by the devout votaries of various sects but were even conditioned by the tastes, ideas and preferences of the latter.[2]

Coins: Archaeology affirms the extensive circulation of metallic currency during the Śaka-Kuṣāna period. It was perhaps in keeping with the emergent commercial order therefore that gold, silver and even copper coins such as *niṣka*,[3] *śatamāna*,[4] *kahāpaṇa*,[5] *purāṇa*,[6] and *rajat*[7] began to figure prominently as popular gift-items.[8]

Monetary endowments: Similarly monetary endowments were not only meant to benefit the donee (generally some religious or charitable institution) over a longer span of time[9] but they also made available ready capital for investment in commercial enterprises. Notices of such permanent endowments (*akṣayanivi*) are fairly common in the

[1] P.V. Kane, *Hist. Dh. S.*, II, pt. II, p. 896.

[2] N.R. Ray, *Maurya and Post-Maurya Art*, p. 74.

[3] S.K. Maity, *EICCS*, p. 17.

[4] Upendra Thakur, *EIIC*, p. 30.

[5] Ibid., pp. 41-43.

[6] Ibid., p. 46.

[7] *Rāmā.*, I. 14.51; refers to forty crores of *rajatas* given away to priests.

[8] *Vinaya*, Nissaggiya, XVIII. 1; *Mahāsupīna Jāt.*, *Kesava Jāt.*, Nasik Bud. Cave Ins. *SI*. vol. I, Bk. II, no. 82; Mathura Stone Ins. of Huviṣka, *SI.*, vol. I, Bk. II. no. 49.

[9] Junnar Bud. Cave Ins., *Lüd*, no. 1165; Nasik Bud. Cave Ins., *Lüd.*, no. 1137, 1133.

epigraphs of the post-Mauryan period[1]. The *Mahāvagga* refers to faithful and converted men who deposited gold with a Kappiyakāraka saying: "Provide whatever is allowable for this bhikkhu".[2]

Variations in the popularity of gift-items are thus invariably linked with the changing pattern of material culture. The institution of dāna therefore far from being a mere ritualistic appendage to contemporary religious thought and belief would seem to have firm basis in the changing social and economic needs of the time.

[1]Mathura Stone Ins. of Huviṣka, *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 49; Nasik Bud. Cave Ins. of the time of Nahapāṇa, *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 58.
[2]*MV*, VI. 34.21.

CHAPTER 8

Gift-Objects vis-a-vis Evolution of Patriarchal Family and Property Rights

The categorical stipulation made by Jaimini in the *Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā* that one can make a gift only of what one owns[1], very clearly brings out the chief feature of all *deya* articles, namely the presence of the donor's explicit proprietary right over the said object. That it is a universal characteristic of all gift-objects and without it a gift would be considered null and void can scarcely be doubted. Manu very clearly lays down: "A gift or sale made by anybody else, but the owner, must be considered as null and void.[2]" A reference occurring in the *Mahābhārata* would show how Manu's was no arbitrary dictum but was based on common belief and practice. Thus according to a passage of the said text: "By giving away only one cow that did not belong to him he fell into Hell."[3] It is tantamount to the assertion no property, no gift. The genesis of a regular giftmaking institution therefore could not have preceded the beginning of individual's right of ownership. A comparison between giftmaking as known to exist in a tribal society and that practised in a property-based class society would perhaps bear this out. In a tribal society all acquisitions, such as a wild boar even though killed through one's individual efforts, would still belong to the tribe as a whole, for bound by close-knit tribal ties, each member of the tribe necessarily labours under the obligation to share. Hence the right to give to a total stranger, outside the kinship group, would be practically non-existent in a tribal society. The giftmaking right on the other hand would be found to be fully recognised only in a society where private property is firmly established.

[1]*Pūrva Mīmāṁsā*, VI. 7.1.7.
[2]*Manu*, VIII. 199.
[3]*Mbh.*, Aśvamedhika Parva, 93.74.

Although ownership of property is essential for giftmaking, still it does not necessarily mean that any one owning a certain article will automatically acquire the right to gift it away. As common practice and our own sources tend to show, what undermined the absolute character of this giftmaking right was the degree to which it was free from the assertion of other's claim over it. Thus for example, in a joint family set-up where all property would be jointly acquired and owned, the right of an individual member to gift away a piece of family land would be understandably much less as compared to the right of disposal he would wield over his own portion of the cooked meal. This curtailment of individual's right of giftmaking over jointly-owned property is clearly emphasised by Yājñavalkya who maintains that "one can give away his own property, if it (such gift) does not interfere with the maintenance of his kinsmen, besides his wife and son; but not all, if son and grandson exist, nor what has been promised to another."[1] Nārada also includes property jointly-owned with others amongst the eight kinds of forbidden gifts.[2] While enlarging upon the meaning of the term *sarvasva* (i.e. entire property) as the fee prescribed for the *Viśvajit* sacrifice, Jaimini also regards it as signifying merely the sacrificer's riches and wealth, and not that of his parents' and such relations.[3] In a later *Smṛti* text it is explicitly stated: "A small property, what is gained by begging, what is kept as a security, trust money, a woman, a woman's personal property, what is inherited, whole estate and public property—these nine articles should never be given away even in a calamity, if there is any living members in the family".[4] The check is duly recognised and reiterated by Mitākṣara. According to him a father has no power over joint family property. He cannot dispose of it, not even his own interest therein, by gift. A study of the emerging pattern of the growing or receding checks on giftmaking right over an item of property would, therefore, be essentially linked with the gradual evolution of property right over it.

Giftmaking and Kinship Obligations

Besides joint property, an individual's right to gift or dispose of

[1] *Yāj. Smr.*, II. 178-79.
[2] *Nār. Smṛ.*, IV. 4.
[3] *Pūrva Mīmāṁsā Sūtra*, 6.7.1-2.
[4] *Dakṣa Saṁhitā*, III, 17-18.

even that property, which has been acquired through his own efforts (chances of which at least in a pre-urban society would be fairly remote), would also be subject to the natural claims of near kinsmen[1] who have to be looked after and provided for out of that wealth. As Max Gluckman points out: "Critical thing about property is the role that it plays in a nexus of specific relationships. A man's variegated relationships with others run through his chattels as well as his land: and the measure of how far he feels the correct sentiments in those relationships is the way he deals with his property and his produce. Anyone who feels he or she has been stinted will conclude that the other does not feel the right sentiments of love demanded of their relationship."[2]

In other words property cannot be treated as being entirely divorced from all kinship claims. Even the present-day Hindu law takes due cognizance of it.[3] It is to be seen therefore how much more effective and powerful such kinship claims must have been during the period under study when all occupational pursuits, whether agricultural, commercial or pertaining to some craft, involved in greater or lesser degree the joint efforts of the family as a whole. Making full concession for these natural kinship claims arising out of the prevailing pattern of economic activities and family structure, Yājñavalkya emphatically maintains that one should make gifts in such a way as not to cause detriment to one's family.[4] According to Manu also, "the charity of him who has wealth enough to make gifts to strangers, when his own people live a life of misery is only a false imitation of *dharma*, it is at first like honey but will taste like poison (later). Whatever a man does for his welfare in the next world by stinting those whom he is bound to maintain results in unhappiness to him while living and also after death."[5] In fact, it would appear that by the post-Vedic period the duty to maintain one's dependants did not merely comprehend immediate kith and kin but also extended to servants and slaves. Thus according to the *Mahābhārata*, "if one makes

[1] R.H. Lowie, *Social Organisation*, pp. 144, 153.
[2] Max Gluckman, *PLR*, p. 45.
[3] D.F. Mulla, *Principle of Hindu Law*, p. 527. 'A Hindu whether governed by the *Mitākṣara* or the *Dayabhāga* school may dispose of by gift his separate or self-acquired property, subject in certain case to the claims for maintenance of those whom he is legally bound to maintain.'
[4] *Yāj. Smṛ.*, II. 175.
[5] *Manu*, XI. 9-10.

a gift stinting one's servants, he makes himself a sinner, even though one may say that one would give whatever anyone begs for".[1] The *Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra* actually attaches greater importance to the maintenance of menial dependants than that of even family members: "At his pleasure he may stint himself, his wife or his children, but by no means a slave who does his work."[2] The recognition of indirect claims of slaves and servants to the householder's property is significant, for it throws light on the evolving pattern of the formations of complex relationships within and without the periphery of kinship bonds vis-a-vis property rights.

Gift and the Growth of Patriarchal System

Wife and children as a category of gift-objects, although not too popular, still figure prominently enough in the contemporary texts to give rise to a lot of speculation regarding proprietary right of the donor over them. From the *Mahābhārata* we learn how king Śivi and a ruler of Kāśi, by gifting away their sons to brāhmaṇas attained undying fame; while king Mitrasaha by giving his favourite wife Madyanti to the high-souled Vasiṣṭha ascended to heaven.[3] The sacrifice involved in this kind of gift cannot be questioned but it is not very clear from our sources whether the objects of gifts, namely wife and children themselves, were willing accessories to the gift and also whether the donor was acting within his legitimate proprietary right.

Perhaps an answer to this may be sought in the changing pattern of human relationships formed at different stages of social development within the nexus of the patriarchal or joint family system. The references to the gift or sale of children[4] would indicate a strongly entrenched patriarchal system for only a patriarch could wield such despotic authority over the property and the persons of the members of his family. Significantly except for king Vessantara's gift of children recorded in the *Jātakas*,[5] the rest of the references suggesting *patria potestas*, pertain to an earlier period when tribal influences appear to have been still quite strong. The *Ṛgveda* refers to the story of Ṛjrāśva

[1] *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 37.2-3.
[2] *Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, II.4.9-11.
[3] *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 137, tr. vol. XI, p. 280.
[4] Ibid.
[5] *Vessantara Jāt.*, vol. VI, no. 547, p. 283.

who was deprived of his eyesight by his father for a minor offence.[1] From the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* we learn how Sunahśepa was sold off by his father.[2] But since positive references to the gift of children are not forthcoming from the age of the Buddha it would not only restrict the practice to the Vedic period but also suggest the swiftly declining patriarchal character of the family during the post-Vedic period. Such an impression would be further strengthened by a reference contained in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, "Moreover, there is always strife going on between kings, between nobles, between brahmins, between householders, between father and son, between son and father, between brother and brother, between brother and sister."[3] However, despite the negation of the principle of *patria potestas*, that patriarchal traditions were not quite dead right up to the beginning of the Christian era, would be apparent from Manu's declaration that a wife, a son and a slave have no property and that the wealth which they earn is acquired for him to whom they belong."[4] The *Vasiṣṭha Dharma Sūtra* also echoes the ancient tradition regarding the absolute power of parents over their children: "Man, produced from seed and uterine blood, springs from the father and the mother; (therefore) the parents have power to give, to sell or to abandon him".[5] But even Vasiṣṭha would not permit the gift of the only son: "But one should not give nor accept an only son."[6] Āpastamba on the other hand considered it sinful to make a gift or sale of a son.[7] This growing disapprobation of the practice of making gift of children is especially evident from the later *Smṛti* texts. Thus while Yājñavalkya[8] strictly forbids gifts of one's son or wife, Kātyāyana declares that though father has power over wife and son, he has not the power to sell or make a gift of his son.[9] In the *Milindapañho* also, doubts are expressed by Milinda about the propriety and soundness of king Vessantara's action in gifting his wife and children.[10] It would show how the practice was looked upon as

[1] *RV.*, I.116.16; I.117.17.
[2] *Ait. Br.*, 33, vide, P.V. Kane, *Hist. Dh. S.*, II, pt. I, p. 507.
[3] *Maj. Nik.*, II.121.
[4] *Manu*, VIII.416.
[5] *Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, XV.1-3.
[6] Ibid., XV.1-3.
[7] *Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, II.VI.13.11.
[8] *Yāj. Smṛ.*, II.125.
[9] *Kāt. Smṛ.*, *Sutasya sutadārānām vaśitvam tuanuśāsane. Vikraya caiva dāne ca vaśitvam na sute pituḥ.*
[10] *Milinda.*, IV.8.5.

unusual and was not quite palatable to the conscience of the society.

Gradual withdrawal of father's proprietary right to gift or sell his son perhaps reflects a considerable softening of family relationships which were now governed more by moral and affection-based considerations. But to what extent it was also symptomatic of the decreasing authority of the patriarch is difficult to tell in the absence of any positive evidence. However in the changed agricultural milieu of the post-Vedic times, excessively large landholdings, controlled by a single patriarch may have become impractical. Consequently there might have been a natural proliferation of smaller landholdings, which not only rendered inheritance a serious and recurrent problem but also inevitably led to greater recognition of male progeny's importance in a patrilineal family. Under the circumstances a son could hardly be regarded as an object of gift.

The growing importance of son and the gradual repudiation of father's right of gift over him was perhaps also due to the evolving concept of spiritual salvation. According to the belief gaining fast popularity, mokṣa could not be attained without *śrādha* offerings made preferably by the son of the deceased. As P.V. Kane observes: "The rigour of the father's power was lessened by other competing considerations such as the ideas that the son was the father himself born again and that the son conferred great spiritual benefit on the souls of the father and his ancestors by the balls of rice offered in *śrādha*. So gradually the father's power over the son became restricted."[1] Manu seeks to emphasise the overreaching importance of *śrādha* offerings when he ordains that he who takes the inheritance must also make funeral offerings.[2]

Moreover, even from the scanty data pertaining to Vedic period, which vouches for the practice of gift of son, it would appear that those exercising the right of gift over their children were mostly drawn from the princely order. The fact is significant. It would suggest that the patriarchal hold over family was strongest within the royal households. Perhaps this was a natural development since the patriarchal tradition may have been vastly boosted and strengthened not only by the institution of polygamy, more commonly practised

[1]P.V. Kane, *Hist. Dh. S.*, II, pt. I, p. 508.

[2]*Manu*, IX.187. Vide, P.S.S., Aiyar, *Evolution of Hindu Moral Ideas,* p. 39; Shivaji Singh, *Evolution of the Smṛti Law*, p. 216.

by kings and chiefs, but also owing to the fact that patriarchal structure of family was especially suited to protect large landed estates owned by princes, chiefs and royal families from fragmentation due to frequent partition.

Husband's Right of Giftmaking and Status of Wife

The proposition that the right of property is basic to giftmaking-right may also prove true of the husband's right to gift his wife. Significantly, references to the gift of wife and to that of son occur very rarely in our sources, and even these pertain more to the earlier period. Notices of the staking away of wife at a gambling match (though not too frequent) would by comparison appear to be far more numerous. In the *Majjhima Nikāya* we get reference to a gamester, who by throwing the lowest possible cast with the dice, lost son, wife and all his possessions.[1] Similarly allusions to the sale of wife are not too plentiful either. Although statistically the data available is rather scanty but even these stray recorded instances, which presuppose the husband's right to give away his wife, in sale, gift or as a gambling stake would throw definite light not only on the concept of private property but also on the existing social ethos.

The fact that references to the gift of wife although available for the Vedic period become conspicuously rare for the period under review is significant. It perhaps reflects a period of cultural transition when swift changes were overtaking almost all human institutions, especially those of property, family and marriage. A husband's proprietary right to gift his wife would be recognised only at that stage of social development when the society tends to view even the closest of kith and kin, namely wife and children, as items of property. In the Epics wife is very often mentioned along with property. This naturally creates the impression that she too constituted one of the possessions of her husband.[2]

The recognition of husband's right to gift his wife, is apparently a characteristic of a patriarchal society. It was perhaps the attempt at augmenting family's patrilineal character through the assertion of male authority, which was responsible for the husband being theoretically invested with proprietary right over his wife. This is sufficiently

[1]*Maj. Nik.*, CXXIX, Bāla-Paṇḍita Sūtta, III.170.

[2]*Mbh.*, Udyoga Parva, 37.17; *Rāmā*, Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa, 34.47.

borne out by the theory underlying the status of the *kṣetraja* son, which regards wife as husband's property and according to which if a stranger sows in another's field, the fruit belongs to the owner of the land.[1]

The husband's ostensible right to gift away his wife moreover suggests that the concept of marriage as an indissoluble bond or sacrament had still not taken firm roots. Once the institution of marriage acquires these traits it automatically tends to negate husband's right to give away his wife. That marriage had come to be regarded as sacred by post-Vedic times would be apparent from Manu's assertion: "A wife is obtained from the gods; she is not received like cattle and gold in the market. She is obtainable only as the result of man's meritorious acts done in his previous life and not otherwise."[2] The continued practice of gifting wife therefore would have proved incompatible with this newly developed concept of marriage. Hence Manu very firmly maintains: "Neither by sale nor by repudiation is a wife released from her husband, such we know the law to be which the lord of creatures made of old."[3] Similarly Yājñavalkya also strictly forbids the gift of wife under all circumstances: "Without detriment to one's property everything may be given away except wife and son."[4]

The gift of wife, despite the degenerating position of women in general,[5] therefore became completely discredited by the post-Vedic period. But even in the earlier period it was never extensively practised. The actual exercise of this right by husband was more an exception than the general rule. It is worth-noting that most of the recorded instances pertain to the princely order. It is quite likely that the prevailing impression concerning husband's right to give away his wife may have had its origin in the common practice of indiscriminately referring to all the members of the royal harem (sometimes numbering as many as 16,000)[6] as wives of the said king or chieftain. That majority of them could not have enjoyed the status

[1] P.S.S. Aiyar, *Evolution of Hindu Moral Ideals*, p. 41.
[2] *Manu*, IX.95; IV.32.
[3] Ibid., IX.46.
[4] *Yāj. Smr.*, II.175.
[5] Indra, *The Social Status of Women*, p. 77.
[6] Devraj Chanana, *Slavery in Ancient India*, p. 45. In the *Tripiṭaka*, a harem usually consists of 16,000 women. Among these 16,000, one distinguishes 700 wives and the rest are called *nāṭaka-itthis*.

of regular wives but held merely semi-slave status can scarcely be doubted. The kings' right to dispose them of in whatever way they liked, therefore, must have been unquestioned. It may have been the exercise of this right which perhaps gave rise to the misleading impression that a husband wielded similar amount of proprietary right over his lawfully wedded wife also. The Pāli literature, in fact, is quite explicit over this point. By referring to these harem inmates of doubtful legal status as *nāṭaka-itthis*, it clearly seeks to dispel any remaining ambiguity about it.[1] Even in the Vedic age it was only confirmed gamblers or drunkards who could think of exercising such questionable proprietary right over their wives.

Gift of Daughter and the Institution of Marriage

From the numerous references contained in contemporary texts, it would appear that the gift of daughter to *ṛsis* and sages was quite common. According to the *Mahābhārata*, Marutta by gifting his daughter in marriage to Aṅgiras, Lomapada by giving his daughter Śāntā in marriage to Ṛṣyaringa and Bhagiratha by gifting his daughter Hansī in marriage to Kautsa went to the eternal regions.[2] But despite the fact that the giving away of daughter is described as a gift with equal amount of spiritual merit accruing from it as from any other gift, it needs to be ascertained whether they can really be distinguished from the ordinary giving away of daughter in marriage (*kanyādāna*) and also how far they can actually be labelled as regular gifts?

Most of our references specifically mention the gifting of daughter not as a chattel or slave but as a wife to the recipient. Evidently in such a gift the father transfers his proprietary right and responsibility of looking after the daughter[3] to the donee, just as he would be required to relinquish this right in favour of the bridegroom in a formally arranged marriage. The social mores in a patriarchal society would always make it obligatory for the father to sooner or later give away his daughter in marriage.[4] Hence the only notable difference which may be detected between a duly arranged marriage and the

[1] D. Chanana, op. cit., p. 45.
[2] *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 137, tr. vol. XI, p. 280.
[3] *Manu*, IX.3, *pitārakṣati kaumāre.*
[4] Ibid., IX.4.

gift of daughter in marriage would be that whereas in the former the father will have full opportunity to exercise his discretion in favour of the most eligible suitor,[1] in the case of the latter, not only he would have no such option but also he would be giving her away more to show his regard and respect for the spiritual attainment and learning of the recipient.

It is interesting to note that it was perhaps this very practice of gifting daughter to one's spiritual mentor or officiating priest which was later on formally validated and recognised by brahmanical law-givers as the *daiva* form of marriage. In the latter the bridegroom was generally the officiating priest to whom daughter was given in marriage partly as sacrificial fee[2] and partly in recognition of his high learning and spiritual merit.

Whatever might have been the motive or mode of selecting the bridegroom, what characterises the gift of a daughter and undermines its aspect of pure gift was the fact that the daughter was always given within the institution of marriage. This naturally must have put the bridegroom under considerable social constraints. The gift of the girl was inevitably accompanied with a set of responsibilities and duties which he now owed towards her. Hence unless a girl was given away outside the institution of marriage, a gift of daughter in marriage may be treated as gift or dāna only in a very restricted sense.

The use of the term *kanyādāna* as a synonym for the marriage rite itself is, however, significant. It might reflect the implied aspect of gift in marriage. The institution of marriage in fact, represents bilateral exchanges of women folk between different social groups.[3] For example when a girl is given in marriage to the member of another clan or group, it automatically establishes one's claim to receive similar gifts of girls in return, or it may even be in answer to a similar gift already received. Marriage by exchange still exists amongst Barhais, Bhuiyas, Dharkars.[4] Hence the only important distinction

[1]*Manu*, IX.88. To a distinguished handsome suitor of equal caste should a father give his daughter. Ibid., IX.89. Even after puberty the father should not give her away until a qualified bridegroom has been found.

[2]*Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, I.11.5.

[3]R.H. Lowie, *Social Organization*, pp. 95-96.

[4]E.A.H. Blunt, *The Caste System of Northern India*, p. 69. Barter was the original method of getting what one wanted and it is not, therefore, surprising to find that amongst primitive castes men even yet obtain wives by exchanging sisters or other kinswomen. The custom is called *gurāwat* or *adlā badlā*.

which may be drawn between an ordinary or normally arranged marriage and a gift of daughter in marriage to a brāhmaṇa priest would be that whereas the latter would be a purely unilateral act expecting no return, the former would be marked more by its bilateral character.

Gift of Land and the Strengthening of Property Rights

The question of property right vis-a-vis *deya* would be found to be far more pronounced in the case of land. Land as gift-object is of perennial value and cannot be consumed in one's lifetime. It therefore raises more complex issues of property ownership both for the donor and the donees, not only for their present generation but for all times to come. By gifting land, the donor besides denying his heirs the right of inheritance also creates problems of succession for the donee.

Our sources reveal that land did not constitute a popular object of gift right up to the end of the third quarter of the first millennium B.C. Besides the well-known instance of the gift of Jetavana by Anāthapiṇḍika to the Buddhist *Saṁgha*,[1] there are not many references to the gift of land, especially agricultural fields by non-princely donors. But during post-Mauryan period on the contrary, there is evidence of a sudden spurt in the practice of making land grants. Significantly, whereas in the earlier texts such as the *Gautama Dharmasūtra*[2] gift is excluded from the list of lawful means of acquiring land, in later law-books[3] gift pointedly constitutes one of the important sources for the acquisition of land.[4] None the less it is difficult to tell, how far the change perceptible in the attitude of the *Dharmaśāstra* writers towards gift of land may be linked with the oscillating power of the family head.

Comparative unpopularity of land as gift-object during the earlier period may be symptomatic of a strong patriarchal tradition. It fostered the belief that the whole property was owned by the father, and even all acquisitions made from time to time by members of the family were made for him. The idea finds an echo in Manu's declaration that wife, son and slaves have no property and that the wealth

[1]*MV*, III.5.6; *CV*, VI.4.8.10; *Dh. Pada*, Bk. 9, Story 4.

[2]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, X.39.

[3]*Manu*, X.115; *Bṛ*, *Smṛ*., VII.23.

[4]N.N. Kher, *Agrarian and Fiscal Economy*, p. 31.

which they earn is acquired for him to whom they belong.[1] Within a patriarchal set-up and in the total absence of self-acquired and individually owned property, donation of land by junior members of the family would be therefore more or less inconceivable.

But even later on, when trade and industrial crafts provided greater scope for individual enterprise and began to figure along with land as important bases of wealth, the recognition given to individually owned property, especially in the form of land-holdings was still slow in coming. This would be apparent from the fact that the practice of gifting land did not gain real momentum till the opening centuries of the Christian era.[2] It is evident also from the reluctance on the part of the later *Smṛti* writers to recognise the exclusive right of the acquirer over his property if it had been earned by virtue of some skill or learning acquired at family expense.[3] It would appear that large families continued to own joint land-holdings. The individual's right and hold over it came to be only grudgingly acknowledged.

In the case of the gift of land not only the interests of near kinsmen, slaves and servants, who were directly dependent on the income from that land, had to be considered but the goodwill and approval of even close neighbours and other co-residents of the village, whose interests could indirectly be affected, had to be also sought. Kauṭilya, duly recognises the neighbour's right to be consulted. He lays down that in case of sale of landed property first offer must be made to the neighbour. He even emphasises the need to obtain consent of village elders for any transaction involving alienation of land.[4] Moreover, with the growing assertion of state's fiscal authority over private land-holdings as would be apparent from the *Arthaśāstra*, it became absolutely essential for the donor to secure the formal permission of the king as well.

Kinship obligations as well as the need to procure state approval and the consent of neighbours and village-head may have therefore considerably stalled the wider prevalence of the practice of land-grants by private landowners during Mauryan and post-Mauryan times.

[1]*Manu*, VIII.416.

[2]Ref. to gift of fields are to be found in Junnar Bud. Cave Ins., *Lüd.*, nos. 1158, 1162, 1164, 1165, 1166, Nāsik Bud. Cave Ins., *Lüd.*, nos. 1125, 1126, 1130, Kanheri Bud. Cave Ins., *Lüd.*, no. 1000, Mahad Bud. Cave Ins., *Lüd.*, no. 1073, Mathura Lion Capital Ins., *CII*, II, pt. 1, pp. 48-49.

[3]P.S. Aiyar, op. cit., p. 42.

[4]*AS.*, III.9.1-4.

Right of Giftmaking and King's Ownership of Land

Compared to the number of contemporary notices of land-grants made by common householders, the number of references available to the gift of land (both cultivated and waste) by princely donors is truly remarkable. Gift of land to brāhmaṇas by kings is widely recommended by our lawmakers.[1] This development not only reflects the rapidly growing territorial base of the emergent monarchical states, but also vouches for the fast declining tribal influence and the increasing recognition of king's ownership of land. Full property right of the king over at least a portion of his territorial possessions was steadily becoming augmented. This is proved by a reference contained in the *Dīgha Nikāya*. It mentions how a royal land-grant was made to brāhmaṇa Sondaṇḍa of Campā, "a place teeming with life, with much grassland and woodlands and water and corn on a royal domain, granted to him by Seniya Bimbisāra as a royal fief with power over it, as if, he were the king."[2] Brāhmaṇa Canki according to the *Majjhima Nikāya* also received a similar gift of land from king Pasenādi of Kosala.[3] Similarly, while the *Rāmāyaṇa* informs us how "a great monarch gave large portions of the earth in charity to the officiating priests,"[4] from the *Mahābhārata* we learn that "hundreds upon hundreds of brāhmaṇas possessing wealth of kine lived upon the lands that Yudhiṣṭhira had given them."[5] The available data thus strongly suggests the emergence of the king's right over land by the post-Vedic period.[6]

It may be recalled here that for the period up to c. 400 B.C. references to royal grants of villages are far more numerous than those to royal donations of agricultural land.[7] This was mainly because the gift of village did not entail the transfer of property right but only the

[1]*Baud. Dh. Sūt*, IV.79, *Āpast Dh. Sūt.*, II.10.26.1, *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 61.66; *Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, XII.3; *Manu*, IV.233; *Vis. Smṛ.*, 3.77-81.

[2]*Dīg. Nik.*, IV, Sonadaṇḍa Sutta, 1.

[3]*Maj. Nik.*, II.164.

[4]*Rāmā*, Bāla Kāṇḍa, 14. tr., p. 35.

[5]*Mbh.*, Sabhā Parva, 47.5.

[6]*Supra*, Royal Donors, p. 43.

[7]*Makhadeva Jāt.*, vol. I, no. 9, p. 31, ref. to gift of village to a barber; *Mahāummagga Jāt.*, vol. VI, no. 546, refer to gift of 16 excellent villages; *Junhā Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 456, p. 63; *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 106.25, ref. to gift of 100 villages; *Pāras. Gṛ. Sut.*, I.8.16; *Dīg. Nik.*, III.2.6, ref. to gift of the village of Ukkaṭha by king Pasenādi.

conferment of the right of revenue collection to the donee. The king's right to gift the entire kingdom also does not seem to have gone unquestioned during the post-Vedic period. Despite several references available to the bountiful gifts of entire kingdoms supposedly made by semi-legendry rulers such as Bali, Amvariṣa, Nimi, Dyūtimat,[1] still evidence of similar gifts made by rulers of established historicity is rather scarce. Even where such a reference is forthcoming, it invariably alludes just to the offer being made but never to the actual gifting of the entire kingdom.[2] Jaimini in the *Pūrva-Mimāṁsā* firmly refutes the king's right to gift his entire kingdom.[3] Even though Jaimini gives no explicit reason for making such a stipulation but the context in which he refers to it, leaves no doubt that a king could not gift his whole kingdom apparently because he wielded no property right over it. It seems that the offer made by kings to gift their entire kingdom to renowned sages and brāhmaṇas was primarily a token gesture expressive of the donor's deep respect and humble regard for the donee rather than denoting the actual act of giftmaking itself.

Even though no positive reference to gift of kingdom is forthcoming, a statistical analysis of our data definitely shows that majority of the land-grants belonging to post-Mauryan times were made by royal personages. It was thus the growing size of the crown land as well as the augmentation of state authority over private land-holdings which seem to have enabled the state to make larger number of grants than those made by private individuals.

[1]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 147, tr., vol. XI, pp. 280-81, *Milinda.*, IV.8.7.

[2]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 54 tr., vol. XI, p. 359. Once a ruler of the name of Aṅga desired to give away the whole earth as sacrificial present unto the brāhmaṇas. At this the Earth became filled with anxiety.

[3]*Pūrva Mīmāṁsā*, VI.7.1-7.

CHAPTER 9

The Place of Dāna in Economy

Gift-Distribution in the Early Vedic Tribal Context

An analysis of the *Ṛgveda* shows that the subject of gift or liberality in some form or other constitutes its chief theme.[1] It led R.S. Sharma to suggest that the social fabric during Ṛgvedic period was "based on some kind of gift economy, respected by custom in the beginning and sanctioned by force at a later stage."

Dāna in the *Ṛgveda* is generally found to be connected with munificent gifts made both by gods and tribal chiefs to the composers of the hymns[2] who at times also acted as sacrificial priests for their royal patrons. Although the exact meaning of dāna is never fully brought[3] out but a few features may be clearly distinguished.

Ostentatious character of dāna: Dāna in the Vedic tribal context would be found to be made only by those who possessed vast resources in wealth—either in their position as gods or in their capacity as tribal leaders controlling tribal wealth. They made gifts because the wealth and property they held obliged them to give away at least part of their abundance.[4] As Gonda points out, what impelled them to make gifts was the widespread belief that "the majesty of a god or a king ought to be manifest, their power ought to overflow. They should bestow gifts, their prosperity should be visible."[5] This would be apparent from the adjective commonly used for chiefs and princes in the

[1]'Forms of Property', *EHS*, p. 100.

[2]B.N. Datta, *DHR*, p. 85; J. Muir, Priests, p. 455.

[3]*Supra*, Meaning of Dāna, p. 13.

[4]J. Gonda, 'Gifts and Giving in the *Ṛgveda*,' *SS*, vol. IV, p. 130.

[5]Ibid., p. 131; Incidentally in the *Ṛgveda* dāna was a special word which meant the property worthy of being given to others, while *damuna* meant one who was inclined to charity. Vide, B.P. Rao, *The Later Vedic Economy*, pp. 51-52.

Ṛgveda, namely *māghavan* meaning generous givers.[1] Sociologists are generally agreed that the social value of wealth in a tribal order lies essentially not in keeping it but in the opportunity it provides to give that accumulated wealth away or destroy it.[2] Accordingly dāna made by Vedic gods and royal princes was expected to win fame and prestige for the donor. The rich praise lavished by the hymnodist priests, who were perhaps the most prominent category of recipients,[3] would sufficiently testify to such an ostentatious purpose of dāna.

But in a tribal social order gaining prestige cannot be the only reason for tribal chiefs to make gifts. That dāna to some extent also implied distribution of wealth which had been collected and brought together either in the form of war booty[4] or tribute is apparent from the Ṛgvedic hymn in which Agni is compared to a noble and munificent prince who gives away what he has won in battle.[5] The fact that these gifts seem to have been made chiefly out of spoils of war is significant. In a pastoral economy since agricultural and industrial pursuits are not much in evidence, war involving communal effort constitutes the chief source of wealth.[6] Wealth which is thus acquired through war naturally becomes tribal property. The tribal chief who initially owns it is therefore morally bound to share it with the rest of the tribe.[7] In the *Ṛgveda* we come across the word *draviṇasaḥ*[8] which denotes a person who sits down to distribute wealth. S.A. Dange interprets dāna chiefly in this sense. "The word *dānam* in the *Ṛgveda* means division generally. As such it had no significance of charity or favour in it."[9] Although it is difficult to fully subscribe to Dange's

[1] *Supra,* Meaning of Dāna, p. 13.

[2] cf., M.J. Herskovits, *Cultural Anthropology*, p. 164.

[3] That gift distribution was not confined to the class of hymnodist priests alone may be inferred according to R.S. Sharma from the repeated use of terms *aṁsa* and *bhāga* in the *Ṛgveda,* cf., 'Conflict, Distribution and Differentiation', *Proc. IHC*, 1977, p. 183.

[4] *RV*, VI.47.22.

[5] Ibid., III.13.3.

[6] R.S. Sharma, 'Conflict, Distribution and Differentiation', *Proc. IHC*, p. 179.

[7] Significantly the epithet *Sudātā* (liberal donor) was applied to Tvaṣṭar because he distributed wealth among his worshippers, *RV*, VIII.99.4; *AV*, XX.58.2.

[8] *RV*, I.15.7.

[9] S.A. Dange, *India from Primitive Communism to Slavery*, p. 93.

hypothesis,[1] yet the distributive role of dāna which is also underlined through its synonym *dāti*,[2] at least in the early Ṛgvedic period cannot certainly be denied. Even references contained in the Epics[3] and the early Pāli texts suggest that distribution of gifts on a vast scale was undertaken at the time of royal sacrifices and other ceremonies such as consecration. But the practice would appear to have had limited prevalence and was more a survival of the Ṛgvedic tribal tradition.[4] With the extension of territorial state mechanism and the consequent break up of the tribal order, equitable distribution of communal wealth could not have long remained an important purpose served by the dāna making institution. Dāna could serve the purpose of wealth distribution only within a limited social framework namely that of a small tribal society free from all economic complexities and disparities. These conditions in their totality ceased to exist from Ṛgvedic period onwards, although small tribal belts existed throughout, wherein giftmaking may have continued to serve the purpose of wealth distribution. In general not only social-disparities manifested themselves in the form of hierarchical *varṇa* gradations but a complex economy also developed due to various technological advancements which rendered the question of distribution of communal wealth non-relevant. As such, even though wealth distribution may be regarded as one of the important ends served by giftmaking under special economic circumstances, yet by and large in the post-Vedic material milieu distribution of communal wealth does not seem to be the primary or even a secondary purpose served by the institution of dāna.

[1] Dange's contention is based on the hypothetical assumption of a perfect commune and an equal distribution of communal wealth. This is not substantiated by sufficient evidence. On the contrary the *Ṛgveda* affirms the presence of some sort of private ownership at least of moveable property and also the due emergence of rich and poor classes by later Ṛgvedic times. *RV*, I.162; IV.41.10; B.N. Datta, *DHR*, p. 70; C. Chakraborty, *Common Life in the Ṛgveda and Atharvaveda*, p. 21.

[2] *Supra*, Meaning of Dāna, p. 13.

[3] *Rāma*, Bāla Kāṇḍa, 71, tr., p. 135, O king, now be pleased to inaugurate the traditional distribution of kine in charity. *Mbh.*, Sabhā Parva, 11.56. And all the kings of the earth brought at his (Harishchandra's) command, wealth unto that sacrifice. All of them consented to become distributors of food and gifts unto the brāhmaṇas that were fed on the occasion, *Mbh.*, Śānti Parva, 29.56; Romila Thapar, 'Some Aspects', *ABORI*, 1978, p. 1005.

[4] *Supra*, Royal Donors, p. 43.

FORM OF EXCHANGE

Mauss' suggestion that giftmaking was an important mode of goods exchange may somewhat hold good for the later Vedic economy. The concept perhaps finds an echo in the assertion, '*dehi me dadāmi te, ni me dehi ni te dadhe*'.[1] But as pointed out by Mauss himself, gift exchange like gift distribution calls for certain essential preconditions. For example its functional value may exist only in a pre-monetary if not exactly in a pre-market economy. To serve the purpose of exchange giftmaking must be bilateral, and also must take place between people specialising in the manufacture of different goods and whose economic status is more or less at par with one another.[2]

Whereas on the one hand the presence of metallic currency in the Vedic period is definitely not attested by archaeology, a few instances of bilateral exchange of gifts by princes and chiefs are recorded in the Epics. We learn from the *Mahābhārata* how on the occasion of the *Rājasūya* sacrifice performed by Yudhiṣṭhira, rare and opulent objects were brought as gifts by his close and distant princely neighbours.[3] These gifts, however, were returned many times over by Yudhiṣṭhira. The account not only brings out the bilateral character of the sacrificial gifts but we may also see in it shades of the institution of *potlatch* involving ostentatious wealth display through gift distribution.

It is interesting to note in this context that some kind of linkage is evident between the popular gift-items and the dominant media of exchange in vogue, especially during the early half of the first millennia B.C. when developed metallic currency still did not exist on an extensive scale. Thus the Vedic literature as well as early portions of the Epics are explicit how cattle, especially cow which figured as the most popular gift-item also served as the chief standard of value at this time. Similarly another popular gift-article, namely animal skins would also appear on the testimony of Pāṇini[4] to have served as one of the popular media of exchange. The reference contained in the *Mahābhāṣya* to the purchase of a sheep for two or three *kāmbalya* measures of wool would also point to the use of articles such as coverlets and goatskins as standard of value.[5] Animal hide appears as a

[1]*Tai. Sam.*, I.8.4.1.
[2]Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 45.
[3]*Mbh.*, Sabhā Parva, p. 48.
[4]*AA.*, II.37.
[5]Md. Aquique, *Economic History of Mithila*, p. 157.

suitable medium of exchange among nomadic hunting tribes,[1] traces of whose activities are found in the Epics. According to a passage of the *Mahābhārata:* "I also beheld there numberless chiefs of the Kirātas armed with cruel weapons and over engaged in cruel deeds, eating of fruits and roots and attired in skins."[2] As acknowledged by numismatists, perhaps it was the fact of social development "being not uniform among all communities and in all localities"[3] which accounted for the means of exchange varying even at one given time. Hence the possibility cannot be entirely ruled out that animal skins besides being popular gift-items, also served as standard units of value within certain tribal pockets, during the period reflected by the Epics and the works of Pāṇini and Pātañjali.

That the corresponding similarity evident during the earlier period between popular gift-objects and the prevailing media of exchange was no chance coincidence would be amply clear from similar identity traceable during the subsequent period. Our sources reveal that during the post-Vedic period with agrarian economy already well established, the value of cattle as medium of exchange was seriously affected. In the new agricultural set-up cow as the standard unit of value was soon replaced by another popular media of exchange, namely grain. Thus one of the *Jātaka* stories refers to rice being used as money.[4] If we accept Md. Aquique's theory that *dhānya* was used as medium of exchange[5] on a large scale by the community, then it is significant how grain simultaneously also constituted a popular gift-item as is borne out by the contemporary texts.[6]

The institution of giftmaking therefore, atleast during the Vedic period would seem to have served to some extent the same purpose which was fulfilled by an incipient non-metal or metal currency under a regular market system. Such an assumption alone can account for the unusual phenomenon of most popular gift-items being generally identical with the prevailing media of exchange.

But in the post-Vedic period, dāna not only became confined to

[1]S.K. Maity, 'Currency and Exchange in Ancient India', *EIIC*, p. 11.
[2]*Mbh.*, Sabhā Parva, 48.8.
[3]Upendra Thakur, 'The First Coins: A Study in Evolution and Growth', *EIIC*, p. 21.
[4]*Taṇḍulanāli Jāt.*, vol. I, no. 5, p. 22.
[5]Md. Aquique, op. cit., p. 168.
[6]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, XIX.16; XVII.3; *Vaś. Dh. Sūt.*, XIV.123; *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 62, *Annadāna prasaṁsā*.

parties holding unequal economic and ritual status but also became unilateral. Religious beneficiaries such as brāhmaṇas and members of ascetic orders could not be expected to reciprocate these gifts in equal measure. The already existing money market must have further reduced the necessity for the institution of dāna to serve the purpose of goods exchange at this time. R. Thapar while conceding that in such an ethos gift-exchange made little sense,[1] goes on to suggest that although the notion of exchange remained central, but in return for tangible wealth the donor now acquired merit.[2] However, such exchange can hardly be regarded bilateral in strictly material terms.

Redistribution of Wealth in a Stratified Society

With the beginning of impersonal money market, distribution of tribal wealth or bilateral exchange could no longer remain the chief purpose of the giftmaking institution. Dāna by c. 600 B.C. appears to have increasingly formed an important part of the new emergent economic order which was marked by remarkable technological growth,[3] surplus production and a widening gap between the producers and the consumers. Between the producer and the consumer now stood a new class, the organisers of production and distribution.[4]

The latter comprised ruling kṣatriyas and trading merchants. While transmitting commodity goods from peasants and artisanal manufacturers to the consumers they also managed to appropriate large surplus by way of compulsory taxes,[5] or in the shape of wide margins of profit.[6] This resulted in much capital becoming permanently blocked, especially since the spirit of commercial enterprise was still not so strong as to induce wealth-owners to disregard commercial hazards and re-invest their wealth in risky though lucrative business ventures, which could keep social wealth in circulation. Our data is full of notices of wealth

[1]R. Thapar, *AISH*, p. 117.

[2]Ibid., p. 115.

[3]Vibha Tripathi, *The Painted Grey Ware*, p. 102.

[4]A. Ghosh, *CEHI*, p. 25; Melville Herskovits, *Cultural Anthropology*, p. 163.

[5]*Mahā Sudassana Sutta*, The Great King of Glory 6.4, *SBE*, p. 264. I have enough wealth, my friends, laid up for myself, the produce of righteous taxation.

[6]Bhaskar Chaterjee, 'Religion and Polity in Kuṣāṇa Age', *JIH*, LIV, 1976, p. 515.

being hidden underground in large pitchers and jars[1] a practice which is still not quite obsolete. To prevent this capital from going out of circulation the institution of dāna appears to have served as a means which proved sufficiently effective. An indirect allusion to dāna forming an important link in the circular distribution of wealth is forthcoming from the hypothetical question posed in the *Milindapañho:* "Suppose some monarch were to raise from subjects a righteous tax, and then by the issue of a command were to bestow there out a gift."[2] That dāna very often constituted a direct circular process becomes evident from the *Majjhima Nikāya:* "Moreover Udena, the king of the Aṅga country, gives me a regular daily allowance out of which I will give you a regular allowance."[3]

Our lawgivers prescribed the practice of dāna as a compulsory virtue for all those possessing wealth,[4] especially the king.[5] While Gautama[6] recommended stern action to be taken against those who persisted with non-giving, Manu clearly stipulates: "He may take it by force or fraud from one who always takes but never gives and who refuses to give it."[7] At another place Manu states:" If a man possessing hundred cows kindles not the sacred fire, or one possessing a thousand cows drinks not the *Soma* juice, a (sacrificer) may unhesitatingly take away (what he requires) from the house of those two."[8] That the hoarding of wealth was a widespread evil at this

[1]*Manu*, VIII.37, A learned brāhmaṇa having found treasure buried by his forefathers, shall take it wholly; as he is the master of everything. *Jarudapana Jāt.*, vol. II, no. 256, p. 205. Some merchants wanting water dug the ground in an old well and there a treasure found. *Nanda Jāt.*, vol. I, 39, p. 98.

[2]*Milinda.*, IV.8.4.

[3]*Maj. Nik.*, XCIV. Ghotamukha Sutta, II.163.

[4]*Śrimadbhagavata*, VII.19. A man who has sufficient subsistence has to make gifts. Vide R.L. Soni, 'Aspects of Dāna', *MB*, LXV, p. 466.

[5]*Mbh.*, Śānti Parva, 137.96. Having realised one-sixth as revenue, utilise it as gift. That king is a thief who does not properly protect the subjects *Mbh.*, Āśramavāsika Parva, 12.17. A king should bestow what has been gained on worthy persons. *Mbh.*, Udyoga Parva, 38.24; Walpola Rahula, "According to Buddha the first of the ten duties of the king (*dasarājadharma*) is liberality, generosity, charity (dāna). The ruler should not have craving and attachment to wealth and property but should give it away for the welfare of the people," *What the Buddha Taught*, p. 85.

[6]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, 18.24.27.

[7]*Manu*, XI.15.

[8]Ibid., XI.14.

time would be evident from a number of *Jātaka* stories.[1] In one of the *Jātakas* we get the following account of the wealth of miser Illīsa, "Not so much as the tiniest drop of oil that a blade of grass will take up, did he either give away or consume for his own enjoyment. So he made no use of his wealth either for his family or for sages and brāhmaṇas; it remained unenjoyed like a pool haunted by demons."[2] That giftmaking was popularly considered a corrective to the evil of hoarding[3] and was in fact, regarded as its exact antithesis would be evident from the conduct of the same miser who reportedly burnt down his almonry and after driving away the poor with blows from his gates, started hoarding his wealth.[4] Accumulation of wealth was therefore decried not only by the *Dharmaśāstra* writers[5] but also as a matter of state policy. Thus we hear Aśoka Maurya advocating *apbhāṇḍata* or non-accumulation as a necessary virtue.[6] According to an ancient verse quoted by R. Shamashastry, "Wealth has four kinsmen claimants (i) charity, (ii) fire, (iii) the king, and (iv) the thief; at the disregard shown to the eldest of them the three remaining brothers will be enraged."[7] Manu's dictum regarding wealth accumulation is clear: "He may either possess enough to fill a granary or a store or he may collect what suffices for three days or make no provision for the morrow."[8] In the Buddhist canonical texts niggardliness is described as leading to continued suffering in the world of *petas*.[9] Thus one of the *petas* is heard accounting for his present suffering: "Unbelieving and miserly was I, avaricious and abusive, I used to restrain many of those who were charitable and were active."[10]

From the contemporary sources we learn how wealthy *seṭṭhis* and merchants out of their religious zeal combined with their wish to earn

[1]M.M. Singh, 'The Dhamma of *Jātakas*', *JBRS*, 1976, p. 47.

[2]*Illīsa Jāt.*, vol. I, no. 78. p. 195.

[3]*HD.*, Suhradabheda, 11; Mitralābha, 61-62; 157-161; 168.

[4]*Illīsa Jāt.*, vol. I, no. 78, p. 196.

[5]*Manu*, IV.7.

[6]Aśoka's R.E. III. *SI*, vol. I, Bk. I, no. 8, p. 19.

[7]R. Shamashastry, 'Economical Philosophy of Ancient Indians', *ABORI*, XII, 1930-31, p. 36.

[8]*Manu*, IV.7.

[9]*PV*. The Master Weaver, I.93; The story of the elephant, I.II; The story of Dhanapāla, II.7.6. To such an extent was I the owner of great wealth, but I did not like to give. When I took meals, I locked my door so that the beggars should not see me.

[10]Ibid., II.7.7.

merit and fame vied with one another in lavishing on religious orders as well as on the infirm and destitute, much wealth which otherwise might have remained blocked in their coffers. The *Dhammapada* contains a reference to a merchant, who invited a congregation of monks to be his guests and gave them alms for seven days.[1] Similarly according to the *Cullavagga*, the *seṭṭhi* of Rājagaha dedicated sixty dwelling places to the use of the *Saṁgha*.[2] The list of donors available from the contemporary Jaina and Buddhist donative records also shows that as against the unpretentious producers, it was those belonging to the organiser class who figured as the chief category of donors.[3]

Levelling mechanism: The growing power and machinations of the class of organisers was likely to lead towards steady polarization of wealth in society. The institution of dāna to some extent proved instrumental in diffusing a social crisis which may have otherwise resulted from such an economic development. Emphasising the danger issuing out of extreme economic disparities, one of the *suttas* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* states that poverty (*daladdiya*) is the cause of immorality and of crimes such as theft, falsehood, violence etc.[4] Redistribution, in fact, need not be understood in the limited sense of distribution of tribal wealth alone, for even in the context of a class society with a developed market apparatus, as would be found to exist during the period under study, giftmaking may still serve as an instrument for the re-distribution of social wealth. As pointed out by N.K. Bose: "If the class differences brought about a growing inequality of income, as they were likely to do, the evils of increasing polarization could be offset by the custom of conspicuous expenditure. Any one who spent lavishly in beneficient acts, or even in sheer exhibitionism, was applauded more than one who hoarded. A practice was like-wise built up in connection with birth, marriage, and funerary ceremonies in which even the poorest householder had to make gifts to priests, even by incurring debts, the more approbation one received."[5] Such distribution

[1]*Dh. Pada*, Bk, 20, Story 10.

[2]*CV.*, VI.1.4: *Visayha Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 340, p. 85; *Pañcatantra*, tr. Edgerton, p. 148.

[3]B.N. Datta, *DHR*, p. 234. Scanning the epigraphic records we do not find the lower orders mentioned in them. It is only the gifts of the merchant class (*śreṣṭhin*) and rarely poor middle class that are mentioned in the inscriptions.

[4]*Dīg. Nik.*, XXVII. Cekkavattisihanāda.

[5]N.K. Bose, 'Class and Caste', *MI*, XI, 1965, p. 272.

can scarcely be expected to be either equitable or comprehensive, i.e. covering all the multitudinous segments of society. Nevertheless by preventing or at least lessening the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few viz. the landed *gahapatis*, the *khattiya* nobility and the commercial entrepreneurs or the *seṭṭhis* and channelising it towards those who otherwise possessed no means by which they could lay claim to a share in the social wealth adequate for their survival, such giftmaking may be regarded to have performed a distinct distributive function. During the period under study its benefits, however, remained confined mainly to sections which rendered religious and ideological services.

Hence no matter how views may differ[1] as to the degree to which removal of economic disparity might actually be achieved through the institution of charity, it can hardly be gainsaid that prevention of maldistribution of social wealth was an important economic function which the institution of dāna performed in the post-Vedic material milieu.

EFFECT OF GIFT-ECONOMY ON AGRICULTURE, CRAFT PRODUCTION AND TRADE

The institution of dāna created an alternate form of subsistence for the religious mendicants, which induced a fairly large number of people to give up the task of actual production and instead take to alms-seeking or living on goods produced by others. In the *Therīgāthā* the recluse's life is thus denounced; "Not fain to work are they, the lazy crew. They make their living off what others give."[2] According to the Jaina text *Sūtrakṛtānga*: "Common people say that men become monks because they will not work."[3] Similarly in the *Theragāthā* a field labour about to adopt the monkish mode of life is thus heard exclaiming, "Well rid am I from these three crooked tasks and tools, rid of my reaping with your sickles, rid of my trudging after ploughs."[4] That gifts made in large quantity directly encouraged an

[1]Robert Bremner,'Modern Attitudes towards Charity and Relief', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. I, p. 37, Abolishing poverty has never been the function of charity and it may be questioned whether even the alleviation of misery has been primary object of discriminating philanthropy.

[2]*Therīgāthā*, LXVII, Rohini.

[3]*Sūtrakṛtāṅga*, I.3.1.

[4]*Theragāthā*, Canto I, pt. V-XVIII.

indolent mode of life would be evident from the following remark of a countryman, who had received rich gifts, "What you have done for me this day will enable me to live without doing another stroke of work."[1]

As a result of increasing mendicancy there may have been a considerable decline in the number of people engaged in active production,[2] and also a corresponding increase in the economic burden which the rest of the producers had to bear. Thus the *Vinaya* records how a "potter making many bowls for the monks, could not make other goods for sale, and he could not keep himself going and his wife and children suffered."[3] It was hence both to dissuade people from giving up the more productive mode of life as well as to lessen the pressure of extra demands on the producers, that Kauṭilya prescribed a fine for all those who either renounced home to become ascetics without providing for their sons and wives or those who induced a woman to renounce home.[4] He also forbade ascetic sects other than the forest hermits from settling in the countryside.[5] Perhaps the same consideration led Jaina leaders also to stipulate that alms were not to be sought by the monks in newly occupied villages (*gāma*), settlements (*sanniveśa*) and habitations (*niveśa*).[6]

The adoption of mendicants' life and excessive giftmaking are often described as being detrimental to both craft-production and trade. According to the *Khadirānga Jātaka*, due to his preoccupation with giftmaking, Anāthapiṇḍika the merchant "engaged in no traffic and undertook no business. So that his incomings diminished and his estate grew less and less."[7] From the *Mahāvagga* too we learn of a brāhmaṇa who for two months continuously followed the fraternity of *bhikkhus* with the Buddha at its head in the hope of making a meal for them, so that many of his household affairs suffered badly.[8] Widespread practice of dāna therefore, must have considerably affected production by alienating a fairly large social group from the task of production.

[1]*Illīsa Jāt.*, vol. I, no. 78, p. 199.

[2]*Dīg. Nik.*, Sāmannaphala Sūtta, II.1.37.

[3]*Vinaya*, Nissaggiya, XXII.1.

[4]*AŚ*, II.1.29.

[5]Ibid., II.1.32.

[6]Vide S.B. Deo, *History of Jaina Monachism*, p. 281.

[7]*Khadirānga Jāt.*, vol. I, no. 4, p. 100.

[8]*MV*, VI. 24.2.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Reclamation of virgin land: Agricultural fields right up to the time of the Buddha were still too scarce and constituted joint holdings of large families and clans. This would be evident from the total absence of any contemporary reference to sale or purchase of land, except the solitary instance of Jetavana by the householder Anāthapiṇḍika.[1] The paucity of arable land suggested by such negative evidence may be attributed to the incipient iron technology as well as the heavy labour required for the clearance of thick forests. The latter task would have been achieved only by those who possessed adequate material resources and also wielded sufficient authority and social influence as to be able to coerce and muster enough labour for the job. Under the circumstances only ruling chieftains and their priestly collaborators, owning wealth acquired through gifts, would seem to have been really equipped to undertake the reclamation of virgin land.

The significance of village-grants made in fairly large numbers during the centuries preceding the Christian era,[2] can be understood only when we consider them in the light of the threefold gain which accrued from them to the beneficiaries and which apparently must have met the requirements for bringing forest land under cultivation. The gift of villages actually won for the donee the right to village revenue, which naturally served to furnish necessary means for undertaking land reclamation. It gave them ownership over forest and marsh land[3] falling within village boundaries which therefore could be turned into rich propositions in the form of agricultural fields. It also gave to the donee authority and influence over village residents, so as to place him in a position in which he could succeed in exploiting the labour and services of local populace in getting these forest areas cleared.

It is not at all surprising that during the age of the Buddha and even later, instead of getting many notices of land-grants we get more frequent references to kings making gifts of slaves, cattle and precious metals to the brāhmaṇas. In the *Mahāummagga Jātaka* king Culani is described as gifting "thousand *nikkhas* of gold, eighty villages in Kāśi, four hundred slaves and a hundred wives."[4] Not only the gift

[1] *CV*, VI.4.9.
[2] *Mahāummaga Jāt.*, vol. VI, no. 546, p. 237.
[3] *Dīg. Nik.*, Saradanda Sūtta, IV.1; *Maj. Nik.*, II.164.
[4] *Mahāummagga Jāt.*, vol. VI, no. 546, p. 237.

of villages and land but also of other forms of wealth such as slaves, cattle etc. during the second half of the first millennium B.C. would have furnished the requisite means for pushing forward the frontiers of settled areas and bringing more land under active cultivation.[1]

Provision of irrigational facilities: Agricultural production may have also been somewhat boosted by the provision of irrigational facilities through religious benefactions in the shape of construction of wells and tanks. However, the strong possibility that the latter were primarily meant to provide water for drinking and bathing purposes cannot be totally overlooked. But, if the water was being used for irrigation also, then the significance of such endowments in the context of a fast expanding agrarian economy cannot be overemphasised, especially when we bear in mind the fact that provision of irrigational facilities on an extensive scale never seem to have constituted a part of the essential duties of the state[2] except during the Mauryan interregnum.[3]

Gift of cultivated land: Gift of cultivated land during the post-Mauryan period, however, could not have stepped up agricultural production. This would be apparent from Manu's injunction to the donee, in order to dissuade him from accepting cultivated fields: "The acceptance of an untilled field is less blamable than that of a tilled one."[4] The gift of arable land by the king would have led to the permanent alienation of that much of crown land as well as the income derived from it. It would have also entailed the added risk of the land being left waste for sometime. In the case of the gift of crown land it would, moreover, have relegated the actual tiller of the soil to a more servile position, by placing him under the immediate control of the landlord.[5] Similarly the gift of agricultural fields by private donors, unless the land had been lying fallow for quite sometime and was brought under cultivation by the donee, would not have otherwise affected the produce of the land in any significant manner.

That the growing popularity of the practice of making gift of agricultural fields in the period subsequent to that under study might

[1] R. Nandi, 'Land Grant, Colonization and Food Production', *Proc. IHC*, p. 117; D.D. Kosambi, *An Intro.*, p. 313.
[2] Bongard-Levin, 'Some Problems', *HS*, p. 200.
[3] *AŚ*, II.1.20.
[4] *Manu*, X.114.
[5] R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism*, p. 52. The peasants under the donees and *Kṣetrasvāmins* were reduced to a servile position.

have resulted in the fragmentation of cultivated land[1] can be known only from an analysis of the data pertaining to that period.

CRAFT PRODUCTION

Our data reveals a vast conglomeration of industrial crafts flourishing from the time of the Buddha.[2] As noted above[3] mostly crafts dealing with products that were also popular as gift-objects gained greater prominence and ascendency in the field of production. Thus as compared to other craft-goods it was chiefly popular gift-items such as clothing, wooden articles,[4] utensils made of both pottery and metal, ivory[5] and stone artefacts, ornaments, medicinal drugs and aromatics which figure more prominently amongst the list of commodity goods found in literature. Notices of craftsmen donors suggest that those dealing in the above-mentioned commodity goods apparently enjoyed a better economic status to be in a position to figure more frequently in the donors' list. To explain such a phenomenon we may either assume that commodities produced by them were already in so much common use that they automatically gained greater popularity as gift-items or else it was the growing demand for these goods for the purpose of giftmaking which provided the necessary fillip to the connected crafts.

In order to determine the relative validity of the two suggestions we may examine those finished products which were generally popular as *deya*. The *deya* items can be divided into three distinct categories. These were items of common-day use, luxury articles and objects carrying special ritual significance. The third category would include alms-bowl or monks' robes which were either exclusively meant for the purpose of gift or without which gifts made on special ritual occasions such as marriage or funeral ceremony might have been deemed incomplete.

[1]R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism*, p. 60.

[2]*Milinda.*, V. 4.5. Kameshwar Prasad, 'Urban Occupations and Crafts in the Kushāṇa Period,' *Proc. IHC*, p. 117. The *Mahāvastu* and the *Milindupañho* refer to as many as 36 and 74 types of artisans and crafts.

[3]*Supra*, Peasants and Artisans, p. 60.

[4]Village of carpenters, cf., *Vaḍḍhāki Sūkar Jāt.*, vol. II, no. 283, p. 276; *Alīnacitta Jāt.*, vol. II, no, 156, p. 14.

[5]Ivory Bazar, cf., *Sīlavanāga Jāt.*, vol. I, no. 72, p. 175; *Kāsāva Jāt.*, vol. II, no. 221, p. 139.

Production of commodity goods of everyday use: As regards the first category, it is certain that common articles already wielding an extensive market automatically came to be considered fit objects for giftmaking. This would be specially evident from the *Vinaya* rules enunciated expressly to incorporate various items of common use amongst the list of articles which monks were permitted to receive in alms.[1] Since gifts of this category mostly constituted articles of basic subsistence, the minimal demand for them, unless there was an inordinate increase in the population itself, would more or less have remained constant. Even the maximum demand for them could not be expected to vary very much. Accordingly growing demand for these articles for the purpose of giftmaking may not have boosted production.

Production of luxury goods: The same, of course, cannot be maintained of the other two categorises of gift-items. The demand for luxury goods on account of their non-essential nature could fluctuate greatly. It was also likely to be conditioned by the volume of the surplus wealth as well as the size of the class possessing it. If this demand for luxury goods also covered the additional requirements for giftmaking then the production in keeping with the extra demand was most liable to go up. Numerous references to opulent gifts made in excessive quantity by princely chieftains and merchants suggest that the institution of dāna by creating an additional demand for these goods may have stepped up both their production and trade, since luxury articles being necessarily scarce goods would need to be specially manufactured. Raw material for them would also have to be brought over long distances. We learn from the *Cullavagga* how the *Saṁgha* at one time had received a *kakkhali* rug and a *kolaka* cloth.[2] The same text also tells us how a *seṭṭhi* of Rājagaha acquired a block of the most precious sandalwood, out of which he had an alms-bowl fashioned for the purpose of gift.[3] In the *Dhammapada* we get reference to a monastery owning vessels of solid beaten gold which had been made by the command of Viśākhā.[4] Similarly in the *Therīgāthā* Meṭṭikā is described as offering a 'jewelled girdle'[5] and Sumanā is said to have presented much treasure in carpets and shawls to the

[1]*MV*, V.13.6.

[2]*CV*, VI.19.1.

[3]Ibid., V.8.1.

[4]*Dh. Pada*, Bk. 25, Story 12.

[5]*Therīgāthā*, XXIV. Mettikā, p. 28.

Saṁgha.[1] From the *Dhammapada* we hear of a certain householder presenting a perfumed yellow robe worth a 100,000 pieces of money.[2] That most of these articles were specially made to order would be apparent from the instances recorded in the *Vinaya* of monks themselves approaching and issuing instructions to the silk-makers (*koṣiya-kāraka*) entrusted with the task of making these gift-articles by the donors.[3] Similarly from most of the above references, especially those to *kakkhali* rug and alms-bowl made of rare quality sandalwood, it is evident that the raw material for them could not have been procured so easily or even locally, and hence their gift may have provided an additional stimulus to trade in those commodities. The reference contained in the *Sivi Jātaka* to the gift of an outer robe of the Sivi country, worth a thousand pieces of money would confirm such a belief.[4]

Ritual articles: The significance of the gift of ritual objects vis-a-vis economic production can be appreciated if we bear in mind that most of them were produced solely for the purpose of giftmaking. We may further note that the gift of these articles very often constitutes an integral part of a particular ritual, with the result that the demand for them remains perpetual, sometimes even regardless of the changes overtaking material culture.[5]

That the gift of some of these ritual objects gave rise to certain new specialised crafts can hardly be doubted. As a very good example of this, we may cite the case of the cloak-makers (*pravarika*)[6] who perhaps dealt in making the kind of robes which the monks used. The Pāli texts very often refer to the gift of four priceless objects to the Buddha, namely, a white parasol, a couch whereon to rest, a stand and a stool for the feet.[7] To be thus described as priceless, these objects must be regarded as having been specially designed by master craftsmen excelling at their job. That specialised skill went into the making of some of these objects would be sufficiently apparent from

[1] *Therīgāthā*, XVI. Sumanā, p. 20.
[2] *Dh. Pada*, Bk. I, Story 6.
[3] *Vinaya* (Nissaggiya), XI.I; XXVII.I.
[4] *Sivi Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 488, p. 250.
[5] A very common present-day example of this category of gift-offering would be the silver parasol, (*chattra*) and the red shawl, (*chunni*), that are offered at the shrine of goddess Durgā.
[6] Mathura Bud. Image Ins. (of the time of Kaniṣka I) *EI*, vol. XIX, p. 26.
[7] *Dh. Pada*, Bk. XI, Story 6.

the following description of how a perfumed chamber meant as a gift for the Buddha was caused to be constructed by a lay devotee, "He caused one block of wood to be inlaid with gold, another with silver, another with gems and proceeding in this manner he erected a perfumed chamber."[1] Among other very popular items of gift which also may be treated within the category of ritual objects and which too appear to have given a special boost to the connected crafts may be mentioned stone images, incense, perfumes and garlands. The increase in the manufacture of perfumes and drugs in the post-Mauryan period may be evident from the repeated mention of *gandhīkas* as donors in the contemporary sources. As R.S. Sharma points out, "at a later stage the term *gandhīka* became so general as to denote all kinds of shopkeepers."[2] Even the construction of *vihāras* and *caityas* exclusively for the purpose of gift would seem to have provided a gainful living to a fairly large group of architects and sculptors.

Trade and Commerce

Made available capital for commercial enterprise: Besides aiding the process of distribution and circulation of wealth the institution of dāna appears to have considerably facilitated trade by making available capital for commercial enterprise. As seen above, one of the purposes served by dāna in the form of an obligatory religious duty, was to check the wealth-hoarding tendency on the part of the wealthy and bring back into circulation some of the capital which might have remained dead for all commercial purposes. As our sources reveal, money was not always gainfully invested in trade even by rich merchants themselves. The *Saccaṁkira Jātaka* records how a rich merchant died leaving forty crores buried in the river bed.[3] On the other hand numerous references show how giftmaking led to the utilisation of much hoarded wealth for more useful purposes. Thus according to the *Vimānavattha*, Viśākhā donated her ornaments worth 109,000 crores in order to build a monastery for the *Saṁgha*,[4] while another instance of jewels worth ten thousand pieces of money being

[1] *Dh. Pada*, Bk. 26, Story 33.
[2] R.S. Sharma, *Ancient India*, p. 117.
[3] *Saccaṁkira Jāt.*, vol. I, no. 73, p. 178; also see *Bhadra-Ghaṭa Jāt.*, vol. II., no. 291, p. 294.
[4] *VV*, Monastery Mansion, IV.6.44, p. 75.

spent on building an assembly hall is recorded in the *Dhammapada*.[1] These instances may be regarded as remarkable examples of infecund wealth being converted into liquid capital. That giftmaking atleast partly prevented some of the wealth from being buried underground would be evident from the following reflection of a person who, according to a *Jātaka* story, had chanced upon a new treasure trove: "I will have so much to live on, so much to bury as a treasure, so much to trade with and so much for charity and good works."[2] The reference contained in the *Dhammapada* to a treasurer who spent eighty crores of treasure solely on the *Saṁgha*,[3] would similarly vouch for the giftmaking institution letting flow some of the accumulated wealth. So when we consider the presence of rich *seṭṭhis* and *gahapatis* owning eighty *koṭis* of wealth[4] and showering some of it on religious beneficiaries, together with evidence of brāhmaṇas figuring mostly as donee and yet investing money in trade or even lending it on interest, the conviction grows that dāna might have been somewhat instrumental in reclaiming boarded wealth and putting it to more purposeful uses.

Nevertheless, the institution of dāna may be regarded as a means of releasing accumulated wealth only with due reservations, for our data also abounds with references to religious beneficiaries, who had themselves begun hoarding wealth. This is known to be especially true of the Buddhist *Saṁgha* in the centuries following the Christian era. That the evil already existed in Kauṭilya's time would be evident from his advice to the king to forcibly confiscate the accumulated wealth of heretical corporations and other religious shrines.[5] Though not very extensive evidence is forthcoming for the period up to A.D. 300, it cannot be doubted that the institution led to the accumulation of large sums of money with religious institutions during the post-Gupta period. It was, in fact, this accumulated wealth of the Buddhist monasteries and Hindu temples which subsequently not only whetted the lust of alien conquerors, but must have also proved detrimental to trade, for it would have necessarily meant the withholding of that much capital from active circulation.

A scrutiny of our data however suggests that the institution may

[1]*Dh. Pada*, Bk. 17, Story 1.
[2]*Kañcanakkhandha Jāt.*, vol. I, no. 56, p. 141.
[3]*Dh. Pada*, Bk. 4, Story 5.
[4]*Khantivādi Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 313, p. 26.
[5]*AŚ*, V.2.37-38.

have made available capital for purposes of trade and commerce in other ways also. Thus it was the post-Mauryan practice of investing money with trade and craft-guilds and allotting only the regular interest that was drawn from it for the maintenance of charitable and religious institutions, which not only kept liquid capital from going out of circulation but also furnished ready capital to the guild with which that sum was deposited. Thus we learn from the Mathura stone inscription of Huviṣka how a perpetual endowment of 550 *purāṇas* was made by the lord of Kharasalera, with the flour-makers' guild. The record carries specific instructions. Only out of what was drawn every month by way of interest from it, hundred brāhmaṇas were to be fed daily in the open hall.[1] It is evident from the text of the record that the donor, instead of wanting to use up the capital to provide for the beneficiary, preferred to invest it in such a manner so that it could constitute a source of regular and lasting income for the donee. Similarly from the Nāsik Buddhist cave inscription we learn how out of a total sum of 3000 *kahāpaṇas*, which were bestowed on religious beneficiaries by Uṣavadata, 2000 *kahāpaṇas* were invested by him in a weavers' guild (*śreṇi kolikanikāya*) and the remaining amount in another weavers' guild along with the clear stipulation that "their interest only was to be enjoyed."[2]

Other recorded instances of perpetual endowments reveal that the capital was invariably deposited with different craft-guilds. Inscriptions from western India refer to the guilds of potter (*kularika*),[3] workers fabricating hydraulic engines (*odayaṁtrika*),[4] oil millers (*tila-pīsaka*),[5] bamboo-workers (*vasakāra*),[6] braziers (*kasakāra*),[7] which are known to act as trustees to various charitable and religious institutions.

Such an arrangement would have not only ensured permanent income for the donee but also would appear to have placed that much capital for the immediate use of that guild. So that in an age when banking facilities were non-existent and loans were given at exhorbi-

[1]Mathura Stone Ins., *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 49, pp. 152-53.
[2]Nāsik Bud. Cave Ins., *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 58, p. 164.
[3]Nāsik Bud. Cave Ins., *Lüd.*, no. 1137.
[4]Ibid.
[5]Ibid.
[6]Junnar Bud. Cave Ins., *Lüd.*, no. 1165.
[7]Ibid.

tant rates of interest,[1] and when the safest mode of saving money was to bury it underground, the importance of the practice of making permanent endowments in favour of religious beneficiaries, by investing the donated amount with some guild which stood in need of the capital, therefore cannot be over-estimated.

Facilitated commercial traffic: The importance of the institution in the context of trade and commercial traffic may be realised also when we consider how inadequate and primitive the condition of roads and other travelling facilities must have been in the early stages of urbanisation, when the state was still not equipped to take on this responsibility. In the *Mahāvagga* Jīvaka Kumārabhakka thus reflects: "These ways are wild and there is but little water and little food, it is difficult to travel here without money for the journey." Though roads and highways on which armies marched appear to have been generally repaired by the state itself[2] and even those roads over which important persons were expected to pass are sometimes known to be specially repaired for the occasion at the instance of the king,[3] the repair of roads in general or the construction of wayside rest-houses never seems to have formed an essential duty of the state. Our sources on the contrary suggest that the task of building rest-houses for the comfort of the travellers generally devolved on private donors, even though references to royal rest-houses are not entirely lacking.[4] According to the *Kulāvaka Jātaka*, once Bodhisattva along with his companions was engaged in the task of levelling roads, digging water tanks and building public halls, where travellers could take rest.[5] In the story of Ankura, as recorded in the *Petavatthu,* Ankura resolved to give food and drink, clothes and lodging places, a wayside watering place and a well and passage at a place hard to cross.[6] The same text is also full of praise for a person "given to the pursuit of meritorious deeds such as planting of pleasure groves, building bridges, making paths and other useful works.[7] Similarly in the *Vimānavatthu*

[1]A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India,* p. 224. 'These enormous rates of interest, 60,120 and 240 per cent respectively, are measures of both the profit and the risk of ancient Indian commerce.'

[2]*Rāmā,* Ayodhyā Kaṇḍa 40-13, vide Moti Chandra, *Trade and Trade Routes in Ancient India,* pp. 53-54.

[3]*MV,* VIII.1.8.

[4]*Dh. Pada.* Bk. 21, Story 1.

[5]*Kulāvaka Jāt.,* vol. I, no. 31, p. 78.

[6]*PV,* Story of Ankura, I.9.25.

[7]Ibid., II.12.

a man expresses the wish: "Parks will I plant and mend bad roads. And tanks and wells I will make with pious heart."[1] The *Jātakas* and other contemporary texts mention how rest-houses were built mostly near the city-gates,[2] but at times on the wayside also for the convenience of the travellers. The *Mahāummagga Jātaka* refers to the construction of one such rest-hall in "which special place was provided where foreign merchants would store their goods."[3] Similarly Fahien who visited India a little later than the period under study, mentions how salvation was sought "by building alongside or out of the way roads houses of charity where shelter with beds and food and drinks is offered to travellers and to wandering priests passing to and fro."[4] Thus it was mainly the practice of making charitable and religious endowments in the shape of rest-houses,[5] wells, etc., which seems to have facilitated commercial traffic from one urban centre to another. Even monasteries, which were generally built away from main townships, may have also served as important halting places for merchants. Due to constant flow of religious traffic these monasteries must have started attracting large number of merchants and traders. This can be inferred from the close affinity suggested by our sources between the market-town of Dhenukākaṭa and the Kārle caves. Thus it is interesting to note how out of the twenty-two Kārle cave inscriptions listed by Burgess and Bhagwanlal Indraji,[6] the donors of atleast five are described as the residents of Dhenukākaṭa. Commenting on it, D.D. Kosambi states: "It is clear from the inscription and from the Sino-Buddhist evidence cited above that the intimate connection between the rich monastery at Kārle and the wealthy merchants' settlement Dhenukākaṭa had a solid economic foundation. The mercantile function of the monasteries was not only the purchase of cloth and other commodities for the monks and retainers, and the buying of costlier materials for ritual and ostentation, but also the supply (for profit) of essential provisions and the loan (at interest) of indispensable capital to trade caravan."[7] At another place Kosambi observes:

[1]*VV,* Revati Mansion, V.252.

[2]*Vessantara Jāt.,* vol. VI, no. 547, p. 250. *Cullaka Seṭṭhi Jāt.,* vol. I, no. 4, p. 15.

[3]*Mahāummagga Jāt.* vol. VI, no. 546, p. 158.

[4]*Travels,* tr. Giles, p. 35.

[5]*Patimokkha* (*Vinaya*), *SSB,* XIII, p. 37. *Acarānga Sūtra,* II.I.8.

[6]J. Burgess and Bhagwanlal Indraji, *Inscriptions from the Cave Temples of Western India,* pp. 27-37.

[7]D.D. Kosambi, 'Dhenukākaṭa', *JASB,* NS, XXX (1955), p. 60.

"The monastic caves were mostly patronised and liberally endowed by merchants, many from distant places, as we learn from their inscriptions. In fact, they were, in the days of their glory, not only very important customers, but also great banking and supply houses for the traders. Their sites were located according to the junction of the primitive tracks, which became crossways on the major trade routes."[1]

The impact of ritual giftmaking on economic production and commercial enterprise therefore cannot be overemphasised. The fact that the institution of dāna always remained central to the contemporary economic order lends support to our contention that a form of gift economy had developed in ancient India and it very definitely constituted one of the bases of society during the period under study.

[1]D.D. Kosambi, *Myth and Reality*, pp. 99-100,

CHAPTER 10

Dāna Ritualism

It would appear that any pre-meditated human act when undertaken repeatedly under near identical circumstances would evince a certain uniformity of behavioural pattern. But if that action is likely to rebound on the sensibilities of others directly involved in the act, there would be a natural anxiety on the part of the donor to avert such adverse reactions by punctiliously adhering to the course of action which had initially proved safest. If supernatural reprisals on account of chance errors may also begin to be feared, then the same anxiety would in all probability turn into blind faith or even superstitious fear. When this uniform pattern of proceeding with a particular act of great social import comes to be adopted and practised by a wider social group over longer stretches of time, it inevitably gets cast into a rigid ritual mould. It would be found to be sustained mostly through a blending of strong social habit and religious faith.

The existence of an elaborate procedural code by its very nature, therefore, eliminates spontaneity of action. It also presupposes its long standing as a social practice.

Gradual Extension of Dāna-Making Procedure During Sūtra and Smṛti Period

Our data definitely suggests that there was a gradual extension of dāna making procedure and it became increasingly more elaborate from the post-Vedic period. But it may be noted that such procedural over-growth was not exclusive to dāna making alone. In fact, it seems to be merely a part of that general phenomenon evident at this time which had led to an unprecedented increase in ritualistic ceremonialism in everyday life.[1] This would be evident from the brahmanical

[1]H.D. Griswold, *The Religion of the Ṛgveda*, p. 337.

law-books of purely didactic nature which began to be composed from this time onwards. It is interesting to note that the growing size of didactic literature between 600 B.C. and A.D. 300 was both in keeping with and instrumental to the deepening hold of ritualism on everyday life, resulting in a virtual regimentation of all religious and social activities. It was but natural, therefore, for such a vital social institution as that of giftmaking to come under its strongest impact. Procedural ritualism left an indelible mark over the institution of dāna. It vested it with an exclusiveness and singularity of features quite unknown in any other part of the world.

The process of gradual absorption and manifestation of these ritual complexities in the procedural framework of dāna may be evident from the increasing amount of space devoted to it in the successive brahmanical texts. As can be seen from the general indexing done by G. Bühler, of the subjects treated in the earliest *Dharmasūtra* works of Āpastamba, Gautama and Baudhāyana, no complete section is exclusively devoted to giftmaking.[1] It is significant that only few references, mostly of an incidental nature occurring in the course of discussion of some other allied subjects (e.g. duties of an householder or funeral offerings), are forthcoming from these texts.[2] Similarly in the earlier *Smṛti* works also e.g. those of Manu[3] and Yājñavalkya[4] only limited space seems to be allotted to the discussion of dāna, more space being taken up by subjects such as *śrādha*,[5] ritual purification, penance etc. Even aspects of dāna making procedure, which are touched in these texts, are not of a very wide-ranging nature. They chiefly deal with subjects such as general praise and advocation of dāna.

In marked contrast to these earlier brahmanical law-books, in the later *Smṛti* texts as well as in the still later *Purāṇas* and *Upa-Purāṇas* composed in the period subsequent to that under study, we come across not just one or two but series of chapters devoted to a comprehensive and detailed exposition of existent ritualistic data pertaining to each one of the six important constituents of dāna (*dānānāmangāni*)

[1]G. Bühler, *The Sacred Books of the Āryas, SBE*, vol. II, pt. I, pp. vii-viii; vol XIV, pt. II, pp. vii-ix.
[2]R.N. Nandi, 'Some Aspects of the *Gṛhya Sūtras, Proc. IHC*, 1977, p. 168.
[3]*Manu*, IV, 186-194 (on gifts).
[4]*Yāj. Smr*, I, 200-16; II, 178-79 (on gifts).
[5]Ibid., I, 225-70 (on *śrādha*).

viz. *dātā, pratigrahītā, deya, kāla, deśa*, and *śraddhā*.[1] Thus for example in the *Viṣṇu Smṛti*, there are separate chapters on topics such as merit of gifting different articles in different months of the year and under the auspices of the different phases of the moon[2], merits of endowing tanks,[3] gifts and their merits,[4] proper recipients of gifts[5] etc.

It was, however, after the turn of the tenth century A.D., that a truly formidable literature exclusively dealing with the subject of dāna making procedure came up. Mostly in the form of pedagogical compendiums on dāna, it marks the culmination of that process, which had led to the eventual brushing aside of all important pragmatic considerations with regard to giftmaking, in favour of utmost faithfulness being shown in the observance of procedural rules concerning dāna.[6] The extent of the importance of procedure may be assessed from the fact that the later digest writers leave out a detailed exposition of dāna making procedure. This was mainly because it had come to be considered the special precinct of the brāhmaṇa priests whose services were now deemed indispensable for the proper making of dāna.

Literary evidence shows that by the end of the period under study, the extremely useful institution of giftmaking had already lost much of its former flexibility and functional viability, and was tending to become transfixed within a rigid procedural mould. Now it was no longer the compassionate and noble intentions of the donor or desperate need of the donee, which were of consequence. Slightest disregard of procedural rules, however, could result in the gift becoming void. According to the *Viṣṇu Smṛti:* "He, who accepts the gift of an article, of the mode of accepting which he is ignorant, is drowned with the giver in hell."[7]

Why procedure was relatively simple in the Vedic period: No definite information is forthcoming which may throw light on the exact nature of the dāna making procedure during the Vedic period.[8] The paucity of procedural details furnished by the Vedic sources would preclude

[1]Devala quoted by Lakṣmīdhara, *KK.DK*, p. 6. '*dātā pratigrahītā ca śraddhā deyam ca dharmayuk, desakalau ca dānānamangānyetāni ṣaḍvidu*', *Manu*, IV. 226-27.
[2]*Viṣ. Smṛ*., chap. 90.
[3]Ibid., chap. 91.
[4]Ibid., chap. 92.
[5]Ibid., chap. 93.
[6]K.V.R. Aiyangar, *KK.DK*, Intro., p. 74.
[7]*Viṣ. Smṛ.*, 57.8.
[8]Chitrabhanu Sen, *A Dictionary of the Vedic Rituals*, Intro., p. 9.

the possibility of there existing an elaborate procedure. The lack of details of even very simple dāna making procedure seems significant, especially when the wide prevalence of the giftmaking institution is so definitely attested even by the earliest of the Vedic texts.

Perhaps the lapse may be explained in the following ways: Vedic authors especially the composers of the Ṛgvedic hymns, unlike the *Dharmasūtra* writers, were chiefly interested in exhorting the chiefs and princes to make munificent gifts. Instead of outlining the still not so important details of the giftmaking procedure they found it more opportune to extol the largesse of their present patrons by underlining the quantum of gifts already bestowed.[1]

Since gift-distribution in the early Vedic period constituted almost a part of the sacrificial rite whatever modicum of giftmaking procedure did exist was perhaps treated as a part of the sacrificial ritual itself.[2]

Giftmaking at that time was generally in the form of gift-distribution undertaken by tribal chiefs and princes on the occasion of big sacrifices. This fact must have naturally transformed these gifts from simple benefices into the recipient's rightful share in the tribal wealth. The recipient could not have therefore felt much diffidence in their acceptance. Moreover, since these benefactions were made by the tribal chiefs more in their capacity as leaders of the tribe, the question of these gifts in any way hurting the donee's ego therefore could not have arisen. This might, in fact, largely explain the absence of an urgent need for framing an elaborate dāna making procedure during the early Vedic period.

Causes for Elaboration in the Later Period

Some amount of ritualistic procedure connected with dāna may spring from certain commonly held doctrinal tenets. It may stem also from some popular beliefs such as that in the expiatory and purificatory quality of dāna and in its efficacy in begetting spiritual merit.

But giftmaking procedural complexities would seem to have arisen also out of certain pragmatic or other prudential considerations. Enough evidence is forthcoming to suggest that giftmaking procedural

[1] *RV*, VIII.XIX.36, VIII.VI.47, VIII.1.33.

[2] Ibid., I.XX.7-8, Vouchsafe us wealth to him who pours thrice seven libations, yet to each give wealth pleased with eulogies.

rules were as much conditioned by economic exigency as by strong vested interests of various donor and donee groupings.

Popular Religious and Social Beliefs

In keeping with the meaning of ritual as a ceremonial act or religious rite incorporated in the body of giftmaking procedure, which may or may not have any rational explanation or direct bearing on the main act of dāna, our data reveals a series of such giftmaking rites whose true meaning and significance may be understood only when we relate them to the contemporary religious and social beliefs and practices. Thus amongst the more ambiguous and yet no less compulsory giftmaking rites which had been woven into the externals of dāna by the post-Vedic period, may be mentioned ritual bathing before making dāna,[1] pouring of water on the hand of the donee, thrice sipping of water by the donor, use of *kuśa* grass both for sprinkling water as well as for preparing a seat, wearing of the sacred thread in a particular manner, wearing of white coloured clothes, sitting in a particular direction or posture, holding the gift-object in a special way, making gift only at a particular time and place, number of donees to be invited, offering of food before making gift, chanting of *mantras* and the offering of dakṣiṇā over and above the main item of dāna.

According to Emile Durkheim and some other noted anthropologists[2] ritual is essentially symbolic. It is an expression of the unity of society. Its function is to recreate the society or the social order by reaffirming and strengthening the sentiments on which the social solidarity and therefore the social order itself depends.[3] Most of these above noted dāna making rites, therefore may be regarded as arising from certain deeply embedded social traditions[4] and

[1] *Śaṅkha Smṛ.*, VIII.2; *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 129.14. 'That man who, rising at early dawn and purifying himself by a bath makes gifts unto brāhmaṇas.

[2] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, pp. 323, 497, quoted in A.R. Radcliffe Brown, *SFPS*, p. 165.

[3] *Lichi*, Book of Rites, 'Ceremonies are the bond that holds the multitudes together' quoted in A.R. Radcliff Brown, *SFPS*, p. 154.

[4] J.C. Sikdar, *Studies in the Bhagwatī Sūtra*, p. 262, 'The *Bhagwatī Sūtra* reveals that it was the general custom of the people of its period, from a king down to a palanquin bearer, to take bath, to worship housegods, and to perform auspicious expiatory rites and ceremonies before starting any kind of work e.g. going to war by a soldier, pilgrimage to a saint.'

prejudices.[1] They served as a common link or as the chief cementing force which keeps the society integrated.

Belief in the efficacy of sacramental rites: Dealing with religious beliefs which occasioned some of the giftmaking rituals, our data reveals that belief in the efficacy of sacramental rites has become stronger and more widespread from post-Vedic period onwards. Since *saṁskāras* now constituted major occasions for undertaking dāna, the giftmaking rituals automatically became sacrament oriented. For example, in the dāna made at the time of childbirth or as a part of funeral rite, considerations of physical impurity (*aśauca*) through touch were bound to be upper most.[2] As pointed out in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics:* "Ceremonial defilement is closely connected with the occasions of crisis in human life, both social and natural, such as birth, initiation, puberty, marriage and death. The ceremonies which accompany these crises are to a great degree both directly and indirectly purificatory in intent."[3] It is significant to note therefore that one of the rites prescribed as a part of the dāna making procedure was ritual bathing or sprinking of water to symbolically remove such impurities. Thus according to the Anuśāsana Parva "having touched the senses once and sprinkled water thrice a man should perform the rites in honour of the ancestors."[4]

Belief in rebirth: As revealed by the early *Smṛti* texts since dāna formed an essential part of the *śrādha* rites,[5] not only certain common primitive taboos regarding death, and the fear and impurity caused

[1]The *Atharvaveda* alludes to rites for expiation and release from distress and misfortune, for relieving one of sin or evil, for removing the evil effects of bad dreams, and even against ill-omens. cf., N.J. Shende, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Atharvaveda*; *Milind.*, IV-2. . . . . those (who are believers) in the *devatā* of good fortune, in auspicious (occurrences), those (who believe in omens to be drawn from) the formations of the clouds, sword-swallowers . . . .'

[2]*Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, IV.37, 'When he has touched a sacrificial post, a pyre, a burial ground, a menstruating or a lately confined woman, impure men or *caṇḍālas*, he shall bathe submerging both his body and his head.'

[3]Hastings, *ERE*, vol. X, p. 456.

[4]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 107.102; *VV*, Uttarā's Mansion, I.15 (investiture ceremony); *Udāna*, Mucalinda, II.VIII.17 (child-birth); *Dh. Pada*, Bk. 16, Story 9 (on inheritance).

[5]*Yāj. Smṛ.*, I.225-69; *Kāt. Smṛ.*, II.5-14; III.7-14; IV; V; *Manu*, III.122-283; *Viṣ. Smṛ.*, 19; 20; 21; 23-76; *Kassapamandiya Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 312, p. 24. 'And after due performance of her funeral rites, at the end of six weeks, he gave away in alms all the money that was in the house.'

by it,[1] penetrated the giftmaking procedure, imbuing it with a surreal character, but also the metaphysical doctrine of metempsychosis or rebirth[2] became central to it. Arising immediately out of the latter concept was the other common belief that for the salvation of the manes (*pitṛs*) it was necessary to offer them food, drink and various other items of necessity. Since this could not be effected directly hence the mystical identity of the manes with the brāhmaṇas was temporarily assumed. Because of their alleged spiritual status brāhmaṇas were regarded as best fitted to discharge the role and receive *śrādha* offerings on behalf of the manes. Accordingly while making the *śrādha* offerings, not only the donor was expected to show to the donee the same amount of regard and veneration as he would have normally evinced towards his ancestors, but was also required to observe due solemnity, necessary to preserve the make-believe character of the said ritual. Right from the time the invitation was proferred up to the time the brāhmaṇa donees were ceremonially sent off each little action was believed to be fraught with symbolic significance and even the slightest infraction of the procedural rules could mean causing offence to the donee and untold harm to one's forefathers by undermining their chances of salvation (*mokṣa*).

Belief in after life: Closely linked with the aforesaid concept was the widespread ancient belief in heaven and hell, the two superterrestrial regions where the after effect of good or bad actions were supposed to be reaped.[3] Since the donor's reprieval from hell or his access to heaven depended largely upon his good actions such as charity or donations as also sin-expiation through the act of dāna, the latter needed to be undertaken with punctilious care.

Belief in sin-transference: The common contemporary belief that sin was capable of both being transmitted through gift as well as of

[1]Hastings, *ERE*, vol. X, p. 456. Death to the primitive mind is the greatest pollution of all—so much so that it commonly puts an end for a time to all activity over a social circle of varying extent . . . Not only the corpse, but the possessions of the deceased are regarded as infected with danger, which must be averted by ceremonial treatment.

[2]*Viṣ. Smṛ.*, 93.1. Whatever a man has given to a non-brāhmaṇa he shall get its equivalent in the next world.

[3]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 104.10-12; *Viṣ. Smṛ.*, 43-45. All sinners who have committed one of these nine kinds of crimes have to suffer terrible pangs when they have departed life and entered upon the path of Yama. Being dragged hither and thither by the dire ministers of Yama, they are conducted to hell by him with menacing gestures.

being washed off with holy water,[1] seems to have led to the prescription of ritual bathing before undertaking a gift, so that the donor may be free of his sins before he bestowed the gift. The importance of the concept of ritual purity in relation to the giftmaking ritual is thus quite understandable. In fact, the belief is found to be predominant not only in brahmanical traditions but is more or less universally present in all primitive cults. To quote from the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics:* "Among the more prominent factors both in the regulation of primitive life and in the determination of the character of religious rituals are the conception of the state of purity and the attendant ceremonies requisite for the preservation of that state and for its recovery, should it be impaired."[2] It is to be noted, however, that the concept of ritual purity comprehended much more than mere physical cleanliness.[3] It denoted complete expunction of all moral, physical and even social defilements caused either by sinful acts or by contact with foul substances or even due to events of social crisis in one's life which temporarily might deprive a person of his normal ritual status and competence to undertake any religious rite. Ritual purity at the time of giftmaking therefore represented that state when the donor through ritual purification was supposed to be least infected with the aforementioned impurities and was hence also least likely to transmit any harmful influences to the donee through the media of gift. The importance of ritual purification (*śuddhi*) may be evident from the detailed brahmanical ruling on the subject available from the post-Vedic literature.[4]

Belief in the purificatory quality of water: Although to dispel impurities arising out of sinful acts or polluting physical contact, the ancient lawgivers prescribe various means such as *homa*,[5] *mantras*,[6]

[1]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, 26.6-17. The sinner desiring to be free of sins . . . should bathe thrice in the day.

[2]Hastings, *ERE*, vol. X, p. 455.

[3]*Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, III.1.26. Two kinds of purifications which the *śiṣṭās* reverentially practice, are mentioned in the *Vedas* external (purification) which consists in the removal of impure stains and foul smells, and internal (purification). Also see *Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, I.5.8.2-4. P.V. Kane, *Hist.Dh.S.*, II, pt. I, p. 65; S.C. Banerji, *Dharma Sūtras: A Study in their Origin and Development*, pp. 85-86; Nikunja Vihari Banerjee, *Studies in the Dharma Śāstra of Manu*, p. 97.

[4]P.V. Kane, *Hist. Dh. S.*, IV, p. 270.

[5]*Manu*, V.226.

[6]*Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, 28.10-15; *Śaṅkha Smṛ*, VII-13.

and *japa*,[1] but one of the commonest and by far the simplest medium to be employed, not only as per brahmanical belief but almost universally,[2] is water. Thus Gautama lays down that on touching *patita*, a *cāṇḍāla*, a woman freshly delivered, a woman in her monthly illness, a corpse, or touching anyone who has touched anyone of these or anyone who is the third in contact, the purification is brought about by a bath with clothes on.[3] Similarly for performing the *kṛcchra* penance Gautama holds that, "the sinner desiring to be free of sin quickly should bathe thrice in the day, should perform *mārjana* (splashing or sprinkling water on the head and other limbs by means of *kuśa* dipped in water)."[4] That water was considered to be the most effective conductor of both merit and sin would be apparent from Baudhāyana's injunction that if a person bathes in water belonging to another (i.e. a well or reservoir dug by him), then the latter (i.e. the private owner) would participate in the merit of the bath,[5] or from Manu's enjoinder that the bather would incur a fourth part of the sins of the owner of the water.[6] Water served as a purificatory agent not only in the form of a ritual bath, but also in the form of *ācamana*,[7] *mārjana*[8] and even *aghamarṣaṇa* i.e. taking water in the right hand formed in the shape of a cow's ear, holding near one's nose, breathing out from the nose on the water (with the idea of driving away sin from oneself) to the accompaniment of these verses *ṛtamca* (*Ṛgveda*, X.190.1-3) and casting the water away to one's left on the ground.[9] The purificatory efficacy of *ācamana* would be evident from Vaśiṣtha's enjoinder that "if after having sipped water, he sleeps, eats, sneezes, drinks, weeps or bathes or puts on a dress, he must again sip water."[10] Water, in fact, served to expel not only human

[1]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, 19.11.

[2]Hastings, *ERE*, vol. X, p. 463.

[3]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, 14.29. *patita caṇḍā'a sutikodakayā śavaspṛṣṭsyupasparṣane sacailodaka upasparsanāc chudhyet.*, *Manu*, V.84; *Yāj. Smṛ.*, III.30.

[4]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, 26.6.17; *Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, II.1.95-99; *Manu.*, XI.222-25.

[5]*Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, II.3.7.

[6]*Manu*, II.201-202.

[7]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, 1.35.40; *Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, I.5.15.2-11; 1.5.16; 1.5.15.15-16; *Manu*, II.58-62; V.138; 145; *Yaj. Smṛ.*, I.18.21; I.196; *Gobh. Gṛ. Sūt.*, I.1-2. One must do every *gṛhya* rite with *Yajñopavīta* worn in the usual way and after *ācamana*,

[8]P.V. Kane, *Hist. Dh. S.*, II, pt. I, p. 315.

[9]Ibid., p. 317.

[10]*Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, III.38.

impurity[1] but also that of articles and other substances.[2] Thus according to Āpastamba: "He (the householder himself) shall place on the fire that food which has been prepared (by śūdras) without supervision, and shall sprinkle it with water. Such food also they state to be fit for the gods."[3] The inclusion of ritual bath, *ācamana* and *mārjana* in the giftmaking procedure, therefore, can be explained only in the context of the above belief.

Sanctity attached to time, place and objects: Similarly the concept of holy sanctity attached to different parts of the human body, cult-objects, time, place, etc., so conspicuous in the brahmanical tradition, would appear to have produced a series of giftmaking procedural rules specifying where, when and how the dāna was to be made in order to yield maximum spiritual merit. Thus the significance of performing *ācamana* (sipping water) *mārjana* (sprinkling water) or holding the gift-object in a particular hand posture while making gift may be realised only when we refer them to the popular belief expressed in *Baudhāyana*[4] or *Vaśiṣṭha Dharmasūtra:* "The *tīrtha* sacred to the gods lies at the root of the little finger; that sacred to the *ṛṣis* in the middle of the fingers, that sacred to men at the tip of the fingers, that sacred to Agni in the middle of the hand, that sacred to the manes between the forefinger and the thumb."[5] The holding of the gift-object with the right hand was recommended not merely because it was more seemly but also because it was considered to be purer than the other hand.[6]

Similarly the sanctity of *kuśa* grass (*darbha*) or the sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*) is so greatly emphasised in the contemporary texts that the prescription of its compulsory use as a ritual object to lend the giftmaking act an added sanctity, was more or less natural. Even Pāṇini refers to *kuśa* as *pavitra*,[7] while according to *Āśvalāyana Gṛhya*

[1] *Gobh. Gṛ. Sūt.*, I.2.9. Whatever (limb of his) requires consideration (whether it is pure or not) that he should touch with water.

[2] *Yāj. Smṛ.*, I.182-83; 188; *Manu*, V.109; 112-26; *Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, III.48. Anything defiled by unclean substances becomes pure when the stains and the smell have been removed by water and earth. *Manu*, V.118 (if there is a heap and large quantity then sprinkling with water (*prokṣana*) suffices for purification.

[3] *Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, II.2.3.9.

[4] *Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, I.5, 8.15-16.

[5] *Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, III.64-68.

[6] P.V. Kane, *Hist. Dh. S.*, IV, p. 554.

[7] *AA.*, III 2.185.

Sūtra: "This is what *darbha* grass is: it is the essence of water and herbs. He thus makes the brāhmaṇa provided with essence."[1] Even in the texts belonging to the period subsequent to that under study the importance of the use of *kuśa* and *yajñopavīta* at the time of giftmaking is duly highlighted.[2] How far the ritual connected with the *kuśa* grass was a holy relic of the Vedic pastoral tradition as well as an overt attempt to preserve the latter, is of course a moot point.

Similarly, popular belief in the auspicious character of certain objects (*maṅgalas*[3]) whose very sight or touch could bring forth miraculous effects was no doubt responsible for the wider prescription of certain items as fit for dāna, just as certain other items because of their popularly believed inauspicious character were held absolutely taboo by the ancient lawgivers.

But the most potent influence over dāna making procedure was that of popular beliefs bordering on superstition which associated certain directions, time of the day[4] or planetary conjunctions[5] even colours[6] with either a holy sanctity or a malevolent aspect. Thus according to a belief contained in the *Vaśiṣṭha Dharmasūtra* south is the region sacred to the manes.[7]

[1] *Āśva. Gṛ. Sūt.*, III 2.3

[2] P.V. Kane, *Hist. Dh. S.*, II, pt. I, p. 657. The *Kūrma Purāṇa* says, "Whatever action is done without *darbha* or without *yajñopavīta*, it becomes useless and brings no reward here or in the next world; Satatapa says 'in *japa homa dāna, svādhyāya* or in *pitrārpaṇa* one should have in his hand gold, silver and *kuśas*.'

[3] *Mbh.*, Śānti Parva, 40.7; ibid., Anuśāsana Parva, 126.18; P.V. Kane, *Hist. Dh. S.*, II, pt. I, p. 688. According to Nārada there are eight *maṅgala* objects viz. a brāhmaṇa, a cow, a fire, gold, clarified butter, sun, water and king, and if (one) sees, bows to or circumambulates these, one's life is lengthened.

[4] *AA.*, V.490, V.4.47. "*Puṇyaha, Puṇyarātra*; Gunda Stone Ins. (Of the time Rudrasiṁha I, A.D. 181). *EI*, XVI, p. 235. On the (auspicious) fifth *tithi* of the bright constellation of *Rohiṇī*, in the year one hundred and three.

[5] Ramashraya Sharma, *A Socio-Political Study of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, p. 154. Besides, the full moon days of the months of *Āṣāḍha*, *Kārtika*, *Māgha*, and *Vaiśākha* were held in Vālmīki's society as days of compulsory alms-giving. *Viṣ. Smṛ.*, 90.5-11; *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 63.26; ibid., 13.20. On the auspicious eighth day of the dark fortnight in the month of *Kārtika* when the constellation *Aśleṣā* is in the ascendant one should make gifts.

[6] *Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, II.8.24. What a man while wearing reddish garments does such as *japa*, *homa*, receiving gift-offerings made to gods and manes does not reach the gods. *Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, 9.4-5; *Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, I, 11, 20, 10-13; *Manu*, IV, 34-35; *Yāj. Smṛ.*, I.131; A *snātaka* and a householder should wear white garments.

[7] *Vaś. Dh. Sūt.*, IV.13.

Holy places (*tīrtha*): As early as the *Ṛgveda*[1] we come across numerous references to *tīrthas* or places imbued with holy sanctity. Visit to them was believed to give rise to infinite spiritual merit (*puṇya*). According to a verse of the *Mahābhārata*, the reward that a man gets by visiting holy places cannot be secured by performing such sacrifices as *Agniṣṭoma*.[2] According to Vasiṣṭha, "The *deśa* that are holy and hence destroyers of sins are all mountains, all rivers, holy lakes, places of pilgrimage, the dwellings of sages (*ṛṣis*); cowpens and temples of gods."[3] The belief seems to have gradually permeated the concept of dāna. Ritual gifts which were made at some *tīrtha* began to be considered more meritorious. According to an injunction contained in one of the later *Smṛtis:* "A gift made at Gayā, Prabhāsa, Puṣkara, or Prayāga or in the forest of Namiṣa, bears infinite fruit."[4] Epigraphs belonging to the early centuries of the Christian era testify to the already current belief that dāna made at holy places was considered more meritorious. The Nasik cave inscription of Nahapāna (c. A.D. 119-24) refers to gifts made at the religious *tīrtha* of Prabhāsa and Puṣkara tanks.[5] The Gunji rock inscription of Kumāra Vīradatta, refers to a thousand cows being donated to brāhmaṇas at the Ṛṣabha *tīrtha*.[6] The *Majjhima Nikāya* also alludes to the popular belief: "If he were to make his way up to the southern bank of the Ganges, distributing alms and causing alms to be distributed."[7] It is to be noted, however, that it was only in the subsequent period of the *Purāṇas*, that the belief in the greater efficacy of gift distribution at holy places gained much wider popularity.

Varṇa prejudices: Many of the giftmaking rituals would also be found to be directly conditioned by the proliferating *Varṇa* prejudices. Caste prejudices would appear to surface even today in the dāna making procedure. Thus we learn how a Kolta is verily forbidden to touch the hand of the upper caste alms-giver.[8] The excessive emphasis laid on purificatory rites in the giftmaking ceremo-

[1] *RV.*, X. 31.
[2] *Mbh.*, Āraṇyaka Parva, 82.2.
[3] *Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, 22.12.; *Rāmā.*, Bālakāṇḍa, 57.3; 107.13; 102.20; ibid., Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa, 58.14.
[4] *Śaṅkha Smṛ.*, XIV.1.
[5] Nasik Cave Ins., *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 59, p. 167.
[6] Gunji Rock Ins., ibid., no. 93 A.
[7] *Maj. Nik.*, LXXVI, Sandaka Sūtra, I. 516.
[8] M.K. Pande, ed., *Social Life in Rural India*, p. 101.

nial would appear to be called forth mainly to circumvent the rigid rules of commensality as well as to render it safe for the high caste brāhmaṇas to receive gifts from donors holding lower social and ritual status. Ritual prescriptions such as offering food to the brāhmaṇa donee,[1] before bestowing the gift would, however, appear to have their source more in the tribal practice of communal eating.[2]

Pragmatic Considerations

Assuage the hurt ego of the donee: The negative feeling of inferiority generated in the donee through the receipt of gift could be removed by emphasising his intellectual and social standing as well as his infinite worthiness to receive such material favours.

Our evidence tends to suggest that much of giftmaking procedure explicitly aimed at reiterating the inordinate worthiness and spiritual competence of the donee. Thus the mode of address used by the donor would be found to mostly emphasise along with his superior social status (as in the case of the brāhmaṇas) the high intellectual and spiritual eminence of the donee. A verse (preserved in the *Agni Purāṇa*, a text belonging to the period much later than that under study) which the donor was required to recite at the time of giftmaking, runs thus: "I make the gift to such and such a magnanimous brāhmaṇa belonging to such and such a *gotra*, who is well-versed in the holy *Vedas* and the auxiliary branches of divine knowledge, and is accordingly a fit and worthy person to receive the same."[3]

An extension of the same need to exalt brāhmaṇa recipients may be met in the attempt to raise them to the very level of gods or regard them as representing the manes at the *śrādha* ceremony. As Charles Drekmeir points out: "The Vedic form of *potlatch* must have posed a problem for the brāhmaṇas, who since they were on the receiving end of the relationship, placed themselves under obligation to the king and the nobles. It was probably assumed that the brāhmaṇa's position was comparable to that of the gods, who possessed a higher power that must constantly be courted by men."[4] In the *Mahābhārata* the priest is specially described as standing in place of

[1] *Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, 6.15.9. In all religious observances one should give dinner to the brāhmaṇas.
[2] *Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, II.3.20; II.3.22. Without giving to others he should never eat food.
[3] *Agni Purāṇa*, 209.58, tr. M.N. Dutt, vol. II, p. 746.
[4] C. Drekmeir, *KCEI*, p. 48.

the fire god.[1] By inducted logic, gifts to the former would tantamount to offerings made to the latter. Numerous formulas in the giftmaking ritual would seem to have been incorporated by the lawgivers to make homage to the brāhmaṇa donees incumbent on the part of the donor. According to one of the giftmaking rituals prescribed in the *Āśvalāyana Gṛhya Sūtra:* "When he (donor) is going to hand over that (*arghya*) water to the brāhmaṇas who represent the fathers (manes), he says once each time '*svadha*' the *ārghya* water."[2]

Another popular concept which might have also helped to assuage the hurt ego of the donee by taking the edge off the unilateral aspect of dāna, was that of spiritual merit (*puṇya*) which supposedly accrued to the donor in return for the material gift he bestowed.[3] Once dāna to brāhmaṇas and *śramaṇas* came to be conceived of as a reciprocal exchange[4] in which the gift of material goods was requited in the form of spiritual merit, it automatically ceased to be unilateral in character. Hence the question of any feeling of humiliation being experienced by the donee could not arise.

By the sixth century B.C. doctrine of spiritual merit or *puṇya* appears to have become central to the evolving concept of dāna. It is found to be well entrenched in the *Dharmasūtra* texts. Its popularity with the heterodox sects appears to have been so much more that it prompted R. Thapar to suggest that the idea of exchange of dāna for merit may have come initially from Buddhist sources.[5] But actually the genesis of the concept of spiritual merit arising out of religious and charitable gifts can be traced to the later Vedic period when it already existed in the form of *iṣṭapūrta*.[6] Buddha, however, is to be given the credit for investing dāna with a still more bilateral aspect when he enjoined the monks to help the *upāsakas* on the road to spiritual progress through religious and ethical edification in return

[1]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 85.147-148; *Viṣ. Smṛ.*, XIX.20-22. The gods are invisible deities and that brāhmaṇas are visible deities.

[2]*Āśva. Gṛ. Sūt.*, IV.7.14.

[3]*Viṣ. Smṛ.*, 93. 1-4.

[4]*PV*, the story of Amlira, I.9.73. One should seek an auspicious and very excellent gift for those who are worthy of favour here in the world of the living. Gifts to these are abundantly fruitful as are seeds in a fertile field.

[5]R. Thaper, *AISH*, p. 116.

[6]H.D. Griswold, *The Religion of the Ṛgveda*, p. 430. 'In fact, there is a distinct suggestion of this doctrine in the expression *iṣṭapurta* (X.148). The gain which accrues in the life to come from the sacrifices and gifts made in this life.'

for the alms received.[1] The idea is more effectively propounded in the *Dhammapada*, in which Buddha speaks of two kinds of dāna: the material gift or alms which the monk receives from the lay-folks and the spiritual gift or *dhammadāna* which he himself confers in return.[2] The practice seems to have become so firmly established that in due course of time the lay disciples more or less came to expect as a matter of right, religious sermons from the *bhikkhus* in return for the alms they bestowed. Thus in the *Uddālaka Jātaka* some *bhikkhus* are heard complaining that men are willing to give them gifts but "they make us show gratitude by declaring the law: they ask us questions: for fear of this we go not ever among them."[3] Hence dāna although apparently unilateral had come to be tacitly regarded as an equitable exchange with the balance very much tipped in favour of the religious beneficiaries. This inevitably created a unique situation in which the donee instead of labouring under an obligation, was himself regarded as doing a favour to the latter. This would be evident from Buddha's injunction to the *bhikkhus* to turn their bowls down i.e. withhold the right from the lay devotees to bestow alms, in case the latter were charged with some behavioural default."[4]

Another popular brahmanical concept which further undermined the unilateral character of dāna to brāhmaṇas was that of *ṛṇa* or debt which an individual leading the life of an householder, supposedly owed to *ṛṣis* i.e. learned brāhmaṇas. According to this belief when the householder made dāna, far from expecting a return he was, in fact, merely discharging an already existing debt.

The brāhmaṇas in order to further alleviate the unilateral character of gifts received by them encouraged the belief that all material wealth on account of their learning and spiritual prowess originally belonged to them.[5] What the brāhmaṇas received by way of dāna, therefore, was their rightful due and share.[6]

The injunction of the lawgivers that the best form of gifts are those

[1]S. Tachibana, *The Ethics of Buddhism*, p. 228.

[2]*Dh. Pada*, 354.

[3]*Uddālaka Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 487, p. 189.

[4]*CV.*, V.203.

[5]*Manu*, 1.100. Whatever exists in the universe is all the property of the brāhmaṇa; for the brāhmaṇa is entitled to it all by his superiority and eminence of birth.

[6]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 126, tr., vol. XI, p. 264. 'Offer unto him the first portion of one's food that belongs as of right to a brāhmaṇa.'

in which the donor himself supplicates the donee to receive gifts was evidently aimed at displaying due veneration towards the donee. Accordingly gifts made at the donee's own residence are categorised as the most ideal.[1] References contained in the Epics to kings personally visiting the sages in their hermitages and showering munificent gifts upon them, indicate that it was a common practice for the donor to voluntarily seek out the recipient and beseech him to receive gifts. The practice is also affirmed by the Pāli texts. According to the *Tittira Jātaka:* "The natives of the country saying, 'A famous professor they say is living in such and such a place in the forest and giving lessons in science', brought presents of rice."[2] The Buddhist literature abounds with references to lay-folks carrying gifts to the monastery for the resident monks.[3]

But perhaps references to donors respectfully inviting the donees to partake of meals and gifts at the former's residence are far more plentiful.[4] From our sources we learn that once the proferred invitation had been duly accepted, the donors went about making elaborate arrangements to accord all possible honour to the august invitees. We learn from the *Cullavagga* that having gained Buddha's consent to dine at his residence, the *seṭṭhi* of Rājagaha bade his slaves and work-people to rise early the next morning and cook various delicacies.[5] According to the same text preparations on a more magnificent scale were undertaken by the householder Anāthapiṇḍika to receive the confraternity of monks invited by him.[6]

[1]*Manu*, IV.250; *Agni Purāṇa*, 209-55. M.N. Dutt, vol. II, p. 747. 'It was the custom in the golden age (*Kṛta Yuga*) to make a gift to a person by calling at his house In the *Treta* age, a brāhmaṇa was used to be invited to the house of the giver and sent honoured with a gift. In the *Dvāpara Yuga*, it was the custom to make a gift to a person who had asked for it, while in the present *Kali Yuga*, gifts are made to persons who actually run after the giver.' *Mitākṣara on Yājñavalkya*, IX.1.9.203. So also is ordained in a *Smṛti*: 'That gift which is made by going (to the donee) is said to confer eternal rewards, by inviting (such a fit person and giving confers) a thousand-fold merit and on giving being begged half of that.'

[2]*Tittira Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 438, p. 320.

[3]*CV*, V.181. 'Now at that time people came to the *ārāma* bringing perfumes and garlands.'

[4]*Yāj. Smṛ.*, X.10.225; *Manu*, III.187, *Viṣ. Smṛ.*, 73.1-2, *MV*, VIII.5.1. At that time people went to the *ārāma* with robes (which they intended to present to the *bhikkhu*).

[5]*CV*, VI.41.

[6]Ibid., V.4.8.

Curb the donor's ego and induce in him an attitude of humility: To induce in the donor the proper mental frame of humility and *śraddhā*,[1] the ancient lawgivers also made it incumbent for him to undergo strict mental and bodily discipline. He had to fast and sleep on bare ground before he became really fit to make dāna. According to a rule enunciated in the *Mahābhārata* gift of cows should be made after the donor has fasted with water and slept on bare ground for three nights.[2] At another place in the same text it is stated that before making a gift of cow, the donor should enter the fold where the kine are kept and acting in the way duly (prescribed) should pass the night there.[3] While undertaking dāna to brāhmaṇas, ritual purity through bath and general cleanliness were also insisted upon by the lawgivers.[4] In the Anuśāsana Parva of the *Mahābhārata*, we come across a description of the proper conduct which should precede dāna to a brāhmaṇa, "Rising at early dawn and purifying himself by a bath, the donor should attire himself in white robes and with concentrated attention make gifts unto brāhmaṇas."[5] Similarly other forms of showing respect to the donee comprised touching the latter's feet, offering him an elevated seat,[6] tending to his personal needs such as offering water for ablution and also feeding him before bestowing the gift.[7]

Similar procedural rules were also inducted into the heterodox gift-making code. That these rules were definitely in vogue by the later centuries of the first millennium A.D. is evident from a passage of the Jain text *Yaśastilaka*.[8] The text regards it to be the duty of a house-

[1]*Yāj. Smṛ.*, I.10.28.

[2]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 70.31.

[3]Ibid., 75.5-9.

[4]Ibid., 29.14. 'That man who rising at early dawn and purifying himself by a bath.'

[5]*Mbh.*, Sabhā Parva, 5.4-5. 'Bending low with humility, the monarch (Yudhiṣṭhira) cheerfully saluted the ṛṣi and gave with due ceremonies a befitting seat unto him. The king also gave him kine and the usual offerings of the *arghya* including honey and other ingredients. Conversant with every duty the monarch also worshipped the ṛṣi with gains and jewels and with the whole heart.'

[6]*Yāj. Smṛ.*, I.10.229. *'Pāṇi prakṣālaṇam datvā,'* also *Āśva Gṛ. Sūt.*, IV.7.7-9; *Yāj. Smṛ.*, X 226 'Having invited them in the evening, he should receive them with questions of welcome and make them sit after they had purified their hands and rinsed their mouths.' *Vyāsa Smṛ.*,IV.10.11. 'The merit which is acquired by making gift of *kapila* cow is likewise acquired by washing the feet of the brāhmaṇas.'

[7]*Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, IV.7-9.

[8]The date of Somadeva, the author of *Yaśastilaka*, is fixed by K.K. Handiqui as A D 959.

holder to feed Jaina *sādhus* or holy men according to the nine-fold canon of hospitality consisting of reception, offering of a high seat, washing of the feet, adoration, salutation, affable speech, affable manners and temperament, and lastly purity of food.[1] We learn from the *Pīṭha Jātaka*, how the lay donor "saluting him (the monk) took his alms-bowl and led him to his house, where he offered him a seat.[2]

Insistence on *śraddhā* for the donees at the time of giftmaking is evident right from the Vedic period.[3] By the time of the *Dharmasūtras* it was deemed so important that it came to be regarded as one of the six essential ingredients of dāna. Without *śraddhā* the act of dāna was not considered complete.[4] Baudhāyana unequivocally states: "Want of faith (*śraddhā*) is the greatest sin, for faith is the highest austerity. Therefore the gods do not eat offerings given without faith."[5] A modicum of respect for the recipient would, however, be deemed essential in all forms of giftmaking for as Menicius, a Chinese sage, astutely observed: "If a small basket of rice and a platter of soup are offered with an insulting voice, even a beggar will not stoop to take them."[6] Respect for the donee however could be manifested and ensured only through a careful observance of an accepted behavioural mode of showing courtesy and *śraddhā*.[7]

Some rules were evolved mainly to check any diminution in the degree of veneration shown towards the invited donee. For instance only a small number of recipients were to be invited at a time by the donor. Baudhāyana clearly stipulates that gift of food should be made only to a small group of people at a time: "Even a very wealthy man shall not be anxious (to entertain a large company)."[8] Further enlarging upon it he states: "A large company destroys these five (advan-

[1]Vide K.K. Handiqui, *Yaśastilaka and Indian Culture*, p. 283.
[2]*Pīṭha Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 337, p. 79.
[3]*Tai. Up.*, I.11.3. 'One should give with faith, plenty (*śrī*), modesty, fear, sympathy (*samivid*)'. Vide S.C. Crawford, *The Evolution of Hindu-Ethical Ideas*, p. 65.
[4]*Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, 14.14. 'One should eat the food offered even by the thief, if he is endowed with faith.' *Manu.*, IV.235. 'He who being duly honoured, makes the gift, as well as he who being duly honoured, accepts the gift, both of them go to heaven; if otherwise they go to hell.'
[5]*Baud., Dh. Sūt.*, I.5.10.6; *Mbh.*, Śānti Parva, 282.19; *Manu*, IV.224-25; VII. 86; *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 90.14.
[6]Quoted by S. Tachibana, *The Ethics of Buddhism*, p. 211.
[7]*Yāj. Smṛ.*, I.9.201. 'After being duly adored, (a gift) should be given to (a qualified) person.'
[8]*Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, II.8.15.10.

tages), the respectful treatment (of the invited guests), the propriety of time, and place, purity and selection of the virtuous brāhmaṇa (guest)."[1] The importance of paying individual attention is well brought out in the *Mahāvagga*. According to the text a certain minister having invited 1250 *bhikkhus* got ready as many different dishes so that each *bhikkhu* may be served a special dish.[2]

To emphasise the need for mutual respect and to ensure the personal participation of the donor and the donee in the ritual, it is laid down by Baudhāyana that if gifts are given or received without touching them with the thumb the performer of the act is not benefited thereby.[3] This was no mere theoretical exposition. It would seem to have basis in actual practice. Numerous references contained in contemporary brahmanical and Buddhist literature, vouch for the donors personally attending to the needs of the donee. The *Cullavagga* refers to a certain householder who along with his wife and children used to stand at the place of alms and serve.[4] Similarly the courtesan Sirimā, at whose house eight monks used to receive alms daily, "saying such things as 'have some ghee; have some curd' would fill their bowls."[5] From the *Majjhima Nikāya* we learn how Saccaka with his own hands served the confraternity headed by Buddha "with that excellent meal without stint till all had eaten their full."[6] At another place in the same text we get reference to a donor who "provided them with an excellent meal of food both hard and soft which he served to them with his own hands till all had their fill."[7] A person who does not distribute alms properly, is thus described in the Pāli canon: "He is casual in his giving, gives neither with his own hand nor with consideration, gives only the scraps away, heedless of retribution to come."[8] The *Dīgha Nikāya* alludes to the retribution which overtakes a callous giver: "Prince Payasi, inasmuch as he had bestowed his gift without thoroughness, not with his own hand, without due thought, as something discarded, was after his death reborn into the communion of the four Great Kings in the empty mansion

[1]*Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, II.15.11; *Manu*, III.125; *Yāj. Smṛ.*, I.10.227-28.
[2]*MV*, VI.25.1.
[3]*Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, II.8.15.6.
[4]*CV*, IV.4-6.
[5]*VV*, Sirimā's Mansion, I.76.
[6]*Maj. Nik.*, XXXV. Cula Saccaka Sutta, I.286.
[7]Ibid., LV. Atthaka-Nagara Sūtra, I.355.
[8]*Maj. Nik.*, CX. Cula Punnama Sutta, III.22.

of the Acacia."[1] The importance of personally serving food to the donee is best brought out in the *Keśava Jātaka*, which refers to the distribution of choicest food in the king's palace, "but there are none to give it with their own hands, with marks of affection and love, but the king's ministers dispense the food and the Brethren do not care to sit down and eat it."[2] The five right ways of giving are to give in faith, to give carefully, to give quickly, to give firmly, and to give so as not to injure oneself or the donor.[3] Another set of five are to give carefully, thoughtfully, with one's own hand not a thing discarded and with the hope that the donee will come again.[4]

Śraddhā for the donee was sought to be ensured also through the incorporation of certain procedural rules specifically aimed at preserving the solemnity of the occasion and duly vesting it with a sacrosanct character. As Mrinal Dasgupta points out the term *śraddhā*, when it became directly connected with ritualism, came to imply "not just respect felt for the recipient but a belief in the efficacy of ritualistic worship."[5]

The ritualistic aspect of dāna was therefore sought to be emphasised through the incorporation of certain ritual cult-objects wielding sacrosanct character[6] such as *kuśa* grass. Certain rules of ceremonial conduct were also prescribed for the same purpose. For example the donor and the donee, after having duly bathed and worn white clothes[7] (which should not be wet)[8] and sacred thread and having performed *ācamana* by sipping water thrice with *mantras*,[9] were required to sit on seats made of *kuśa* grass.[10] They also had to recite

[1]*Dīg. Nik.*, XXIII. Payasi Suttanta, II.354.

[2]*Keśava Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 346, p. 94.

[3]*Aṅg. Nik.*, III.172.

[4]J. Hastings, *ERE*, vol. III, p. 382.

[5]Mrinal Dasgupta, '*Sraddhā* and *Bhakti* in Vedic Literature', *IHQ*, vol. VI, 1930, p. 320.

[6]*Manu*, III.255, '*kuśa* grass, *mantras*, morning *Harishyannam* and things, which have been enumerated as sacred before are the blessed accessories to a *śraddhā* offered to the deities.'

[7]*Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, II.8.15.5 also Baudhāyana quoted by Mitramishra vide K.V.R. Aiyangar, *KK-DK*, p. 85. 'A gift should not be made or received wearing yellow or coloured clothes.'

[8]*Āpastamba* quoted by Vīrmitrodaya, p. 150.

[9]*Viṣ. Smṛ.*, 73.2, 'He shall cause the brāhmaṇas, who have properly bathed and done the rite of *ācamana*, to be seated on cushions of *kuśā* grass.'

[10]Ibid.

specific *mantras*[1] and utter certain incantation while making or accepting the gift. Even the exact posture in which they had to sit and the way they were to hold the gift-object in their hands was duly specified. Thus the donor and the donee had to sit facing each other, the former facing east. Their hands were to be held between the knees (*antar jānukaraḥ*). Moreover, the gift-object was to be grasped with the right hand and the dakṣiṇā also had to be placed in the centre of the right palm of the donee. An indispensable part of the entire ritual which imbued it with maximum symbolic sanctity, was the pouring of the water through *kuśa* grass (*kuśodakaṃ*) on the hand of the donee. According to Āpastamba, 'all gifts are to be made with water.'[2] *Śraddhā* for the donee was further evinced through the performance of the rite of circumambulation to be followed by the giving of dakṣiṇā.[3] While offering the latter, the donor had to say 'be ye free' and the brāhmaṇas shall reply 'we have become free.' The donee also had to be respectfully fed[4] and seen off by the donor.[5] Perhaps in order to lend the act of dāna greater religious sanctity the *Gobhila Gṛhya Sūtra* stipulates: "When a donation has been made, he should offer a *bali*. This is sacred to Rudra."[6]

The punctilious observance of these procedural rules eliminated the possibility of any disrespect being shown towards the donee. It

[1]*Viṣ. Smṛ.*, 73.11. 'Then by means of scented water containing sesame and *kuśa* grass, he shall prepare and offer the *pādyaṃ* (water for washing feet) and dress up and offer the *arghya* and unguent offering by reciting the *mantras* commencing as '*yā stithantvāmṛta vāk*' etc. and 'yanme mātā' etc. After that he shall worship the brāhmaṇas with offering of *kuśa*, sesame, clothes, flowers, ornaments, burning incense stick to the best of his might.'

[2]*Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, II.4.9.8; *Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, V.16.

[3]*Viṣ. Smṛ.*, 73.25-31. 'Then he shall circumambulate the brāhmaṇas seated with their faces towards the east, muttering the *mantra*, and having finished the rite of circumambulation, he shall give them their dakṣiṇās, according to his might . . . Then having addressed the brāhmaṇas with their names and *gotras*, he shall give them *akṣyaya* water and address them as, 'O' ye Viśvedevas.' After that, calm in mind and with the palms of his hand blended together, he shall pray as follows: 'Let there be more makers of gifts in our family' and the brāhmaṇas shall reply 'be it so.' Having muttered these two *mantras*, he shall receive blessing. Then after having duly propitiated, followed and bid farewell to the brāhmaṇas, he shall read aloud the *mantra* running as '*vaje, vaje*' etc.

[4]*Manu*, III.251. 'Having asked the brāhmaṇas have you well eaten?' or 'have you been repleted?' he shall ask them to wash their mouths and hands.

[5]*Viṣ. Smṛ.*, 74.1. 'Follow them to a little distance from the house and bid them adieu.'

[6]*Gobh. Gṛ. Sūt.*, I.4.31.

also guaranteed a certain amount of *śraddhā* being affected by the donor towards him.

Safeguard the interests of the donor: Once the concept of spiritual merit (*puṇya*) had become firmly rooted in the popular mind, it naturally gave rise to the fear that any error in giftmaking might result in the total loss of spiritual merit for the donor. An established norm or a standard form of giftmaking procedure was therefore required to allay the donor's anxiety and to ensure the fruitfulness of the gift for him. The donor laboured under other fears too. These mainly stemmed from his anxiety of not causing (even inadvertently) any offence to the donee, for that could prove disastrous for him (i.e. the donor) in more than one way.

Since gifts are meant to build and augment social relationships,[1] donee's displeasure incurred through some procedural default on the part of the donor could adversely affect that relationship. Symbolical representation of social ties through giftmaking is found to be especially common in early tribal societies. In such societies, gifts made on ceremonial occasions played a pivotal role in establishing, defining and sustaining social bonds. But even in state-based and class-divided societies, giftmaking continued to retain much of its former symbolic character and purpose due to die-hard social habits and inherent social beliefs. The stipulation contained in the *Khadira Gṛhya Sūtra*, "to one with whom he wishes to become associated he should give fruits of a big tree"[2] may be reminiscent of an earlier practice.

Even more than his concern to safeguard social relationships, the fear uppermost in the donor's mind in the case of gift to religious beneficiaries, was the harm which the latter could cause to the donor's own person through the medium of gift. It would, in fact, seem strange how the gift-object from which the donor had apparently withdrawn all claims could still threaten his personal well-being.

The explanation to this may be sought in the widely held primitive belief that the gift-object constitutes a part of the giver; so that "even when abandoned by the giver, it still forms a part of him."[3] According

[1]A.R. Hands, *CSAGR*, p. 26. 'The offer of a gift represents an offer of friendship.' Mary Douglas, ed., *Man in Society*, vol. IV, 1964, p. 138. 'Gift-giving and hospitality are seldom haphazard. Presents and invitations are full of symbolism about the relationship between the giver and the receiver.' A letter ascribed to Aristotle, which is quoted by A.R. Hands (*CSAGR*), declares that giving and returning is that which binds men together in their living.

[2]*Khad. Gṛ. Sūt.*, IV.1.11.

[3]M. Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 9.

to Vander Leeuw: "To give is to convey something of oneself to a strange being, so that a firm bond may be forged."[1] It is this same belief which seems to have led Emerson to remark: "The only gift is a portion of thyself."[2] According to primitive notions "the nature of anything is inhering in all its parts, even when the parts are separated from it."[3] Logically it would mean that if a man is in all his parts, whether it is his blood, saliva, umbilical cord, hair clippings or even his name, portrait, garments, food, implements etc. then even when these are detached from him, they would still become the medium either of his action upon others or of the action of others upon him. To quote Grierson: "A part may be so impressed with his personality, with his intention for good or ill as to benefit or injure any one with whom it may be brought into contact. On the other hand whoever gets possession of it, through it will be able to work his will at any distance, upon the man himself."[4] J.G. Frazer, regards the latter concept to be one of the two chief bases of all magical beliefs and rituals,[5] especially the widespread primitive cult of sacrifices.

The belief regarding mystical identity of gift-object with the donor does not appear to be totally alien to our sources. In the *Mahābhārata*, we come across this concept in the form of a ritual formula to be repeated at the time of gift. In it the donor, addressing the cattle which is to be given away, proclaims: "What you are, I am; today I become of your essence and giving you I give myself."[6] The mystical concept regarding donor being one with the gift-object could not be more forcefully reiterated than in the form of the *go-vrata* ritual which a giver of a cattle had to undertake prior to the bestowal of the gift. According to the rules of this particular giftmaking rite, the donor was not only required to live for three days exclusively on milk, urine and dung of the cow,[7] but also had to spend that time in the cowpen living among the cattle and even sleeping on the ground

[1]cf. Vander Leeuw, *Religions*, p. 351, quoted by J. Gonda, 'Gifts and Giving'. *SS*. p. 129.

[2]R.W. Emerson, *Essays*, p. 322.

[3]Quoted in Hastings, *ERE*, vol. VI, p. 201.

[4]J. Hastings, *ERE*, vol. VI, p. 201.

[5]J.G. Frazer, *Golden Bough*, vol. I, A Study in Magic and Religion, p. 52.

[6]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 75.13. '*Yā va yūyaṃ soham, yuṣmān dattvā caham ātmapradāta.*'

[7]Ibid., 75.19.

with them, till he finally identified himself with them in spirit.[1] Even the recipient, while formally acknowledging the receipt of the gift, was made to repeat the following formula: "Transmitted in spirit, received in spirit, glorify we both, you who have the forms of the sun and moon."[2]

With such popular beliefs and magical ideas having a strong hold over popular mind, it was natural for the people to consider gifts as constituting a threat to the donor's well-being. Hence while contemplating a gift, the donor according to contemporary brahmanical and Buddhist injunctions not only had to look into the why and wherefore of the gift, but also had to be extremely wary and discreet in selecting the donee as well as in the actual bestowal of the gift-object.

Perhaps to safeguard against any wilful harm or mischief being caused to the donor, the ancient lawgivers recommended that the wicked must be shunned as far as the bestowal of gifts was concerned. In the Anuśāsana Parva the belief is expressed that if a gift is made to an unworthy recipient, it (i.e. the gift-object) tends to grieve. "One should correctly ascertain who the person is that should be regarded as a proper object for making gifts. He should be such that the gift itself, by being made over to him may not grieve (*na saṁtapeta*)."[3]

It would be also worth considering how far the same portentous fear weighed with ancient lawgivers when they laid down that people who were intoxicated, or not of proper complexion, or deformed, or people who were thieves or served as physicians, were to be excluded from the list of worthy recipients.[4] Perhaps it was for the same reason that even those brāhmaṇas who were of cat-like conduct (*biḍālavrati*) or who were hypocrites (*bakavrati*), were deemed unworthy of receiving gifts.[5] According to both brahmanical and heterodox concepts of discriminate charity, gifts must be made only to those who possessed moral and spiritual powers. According to the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, a gift bears much fruit only when given to a person, "no matter what his social class, who has left the world and exchanged the domestic for

[1]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, tr., p. 9.
[2]Vide, Mauss, op. cit., p. 57.
[3]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 37.5.
[4]Ibid, Śānti Parva, 37.30.
[5]*Viṣ. Smṛ.*, XCIII.7; *Manu*, IV.192.

the homeless life, who has abolished five qualities and is possessed of five qualities."[1]

The rules, which forbade making gifts to brāhmaṇas and monks,[2] who practised augury or other forms of divination would seem to be also prompted by the same consideration for the donor's temporal and spiritual well-being.[3]

Some of the giftmaking procedural rules were perhaps meant to ensure that the donor did not incur the wrath and malediction of the donee, especially if the latter (as in the case of the brāhmaṇas and the *bhikkhus*) laid even slightest pretension to supernatural powers. The Jaina text *Uttarādhyāyana Sutta* contains the following injunction for the lay donors: "Prostrate yourself before him (the monk) for protection if you want to save your life and your property, for in his wrath he might reduce the world to ashes."[4] According to the *Bṛhaspati Smṛti* a brāhmaṇa's anger is fiercer than a discus. One should not make a brāhmaṇa irate, for there is no regrowth for him who has been destroyed by a brāhmaṇa's ire.[5] It was perhaps to make sure that the donee had not taken offence in any way that the latter was made to recite the following benediction: "May welfare attend them" before the gift was finally presented to him.[6]

Protect interests of the donee: Some giftmaking rules stemmed from the need to severe the strong mystical bond which seemingly exists between the donor and the gift-object.[7] If the gift is likely to prove instrumental in making the donor a victim of an iniquitous

[1]*Saṁ. Nik.*, III.3.4.
[2]*Manu*, VI.50. 'Neither by explaining prodigies and omens nor by skill in astrology and palmistry, nor by giving advice and by the exposition of the *śāstras*, let him ever seek to obtain alms.' *Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, II.2.16. 'The following offences make men impure . . . making a living by astrology and so forth.'
[3]*Uttarādhyāyana Sūtra*, Lec. XX.45.
[4]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 157, tr., vol. XI, pt. II, p. 355. 'They (the brāhmaṇas) would make gods of those that are not gods, and not gods of those that are gods. Enraged, they can create other worlds . . . The fire of their wrath yet burns in the forest of Daṇḍaka.'
[5]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, V.19, '*svasti vācya bhikṣādānamppurvaṃ.*'
[6]*Bṛ.*, *Smṛ.*, 49.
[7]Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 62 (Ref. to the ancient Chinese custom, which recognises the indissoluble bond of a thing with its original owner): 'Even today the man who sells property retains the right during the rest of his life to weep over it.'

fate, it is equally capable of serving as a means of transmitting the donor's evil qualities or sins to the donee. If the gift carries a risk for the donor, it is perhaps even more dangerous for the donee to accept it.[1] All kinds of precautions therefore become necessary.[2] If the donor needs to be wary and careful in the selection of the donee, the donee has to be even more particular about the person from whom he accepts gifts. He would otherwise run the risk of being burdened with the donor's sin. He may even become subject to some disease transmitted to him by the donor. The *Dharmaśāstra* writers recommend discriminate *pratigraha* i.e. acceptance of gifts from only worthy and virtuous donors. Manu stipulates that an erudite brāhmaṇa should be afraid of accepting a gift from all and sundry; 'by taking a small gift, even a fool sinks (into hell) as a cow into a morass.'[3] In the Anuśāsana Parva Bhīṣma thus expounds the concept: "O son, a kṣatriya is generally employed in deeds of fierceness. In his case sacrifices and gifts are regarded as cleaning or sanctifying him. They that are good and righteous do not accept the gifts of persons of the royal order, who are given to sinful acts."[4] But if on account of some dire need, one is forced to accept gifts from unrighteous donors then special Dharmaśāstric rules for the purification of the gift-object existed which lessened the risk involved in its acceptance. Āpastamba lays down that a brāhmaṇa may eat food obtained from anybody, after having touched it with gold or with fire.[5] Procedural rules were framed even to negate the evil effects of gifts already accepted. According to Manu, a man is freed from the guilt of accepting presents from a wicked man, "by muttering with a concentrated mind the *Sāvitri* three thousand times, dwelling for a month in a cow house and subsisting on milk."[6]

Another primitive belief, which seems to have penetrated the brahmanical concept of dāna by post-Vedic times when Vedic culture was maximum exposed to non-Vedic influences, was that of disease (like

[1]M. Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 58; John Mckenzie, *Hindu Ethics*, p. 58. 'The danger is greater to the receiver than to the giver.'

[2]C. Drekmeir, *KCEI*, p. 52. 'The sin of the giver is transferred with the gift and precautions must be taken'. *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 61.10-11.

[3]*Manu*, IV.191.

[4]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 60.4.5, *'natu pāpkṛtam rajñam pratigṛhanti sādhavaḥ*; *Manu*, IV.86.

[5]*Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, I.6.18.15.

[6]*Manu*, XI.195.

sin) clinging to the person of a man. It was capable of being washed off[1] or transmitted to another person through the medium of a gift-object.[2] The tenet finds exposition in the following *Dharmasūtra* verse: "He who expends his hoard (in gifts) becomes free from disease."[3] "For a person that is sick or suffering or afflicted with consumption, a mess of boiled (rice) grains in six oblations (should be offered)."[4] The belief that disease could be transferred or caused by magical charms seems to have formed an important basis of the Tantric cultic tradition, which may be traced back to the *Atharvaveda*.[5] Assimilation of the above belief into the brahmanical dāna ideology was, therefore largely the effect of cultural syncretism so much in evidence during the later and post-Vedic times.[6] In the *Arthaśāstra*, Kauṭilya talks of royal agents posing as holymen who were capable of causing disease to the enemy.[7] One Aśokan edict refers to men practising various ceremonies during illness.[8]

Once gifts came to be regarded as carriers of the donor's sins, they were automatically looked upon with misgiving. They were treated as something not altogether welcome, unless their mystical association with the donor was effectively dispelled through symbolic rites and incantation of *mantras*. Hence arose the great need for a definite gift-making procedure. Manu clearly enjoins: "Ignorant of the regulations of the *śāstra* as regards the taking of gift-articles, a (brāhmaṇa) overwhelmed with hunger must not take a gift."[9]

The mystical efficacy of the giftmaking ritual would be evident from the fact that in the *Mahābhārata* it is required to be treated as a closely guarded secret: "One should not, by imparting a knowledge of this ritual, benefit a person that is not one's disciple, or that is not observant of vows, or that is bereft of faith or that is possessed of a crooked understanding. Verily, this religion is a mystery unknown

[1]*Vaś. Dh. Sūt.*, XVIII.16. 'If ever a worm is produced in an open wound (on his body), he shall purify himself by the *Prajāpatya* penance, and give gold, a cow and a garment as presents (to brāhmaṇas).'

[2]S.C. Mitra, 'On Soma Indian Ceremonies for Disease-transference', *JASB*, *NS*, XIII, 1917, p. 13.

[3]*Vaś. Dh. Sūt.*, XXIX.7.

[4]*Aśva. Gṛ. Sūt.*, III.6.3.

[5]B. Chintaharan Chakravarti, 'Antiquity of Tantricism', *IHQ*, VI, 1930.

[6]B.N. Datta, *DHR*, pt. II, p. 293.

[7]*AŚ*, V.2.59.

[8]Aśoka's R.E. IX, *CII*, I, pp. 16-17.

[9]*Manu*, IV.187.

to most people. One that knows it should not speak of it at every place."[1]

Our data shows how specific *mantras* with tacit magical efficacy were required to be recited by the donor and the donee for formally severing the mystical bond between the donor and the gift-object. According to an injunction contained in the didactic portion of the *Mahābhārata*, at the time of receiving the gift of a cow, the donee addressing the gift-object had to say "You are no longer owned by him who gives you away; Ye have now become mine."[2]

Similarly the pouring of water by the donor became the most significant part of the giftmaking rite.[3] Without it no gift could be considered complete. It marked the formal annulment of the donor's power of possession over the gift-object.[4] The act of pouring water at the time of giftmaking rendered the latter free of all harm and hence safe for the donee to accept.

Even the followers of heterodox faiths, who otherwise vehemently condemned and rejected all Vedic ritualism, favoured and adopted the practice of pouring water as an essential part of giftmaking.[5] In the *Dhammapada* we get reference to water of donation being poured into the right hand of the Tathāgata.[6] From the Mathura Lion Capital Inscription we learn how Kṣatrapa Soḍāṣa gifted a piece of land with libations of water to the teacher Buddhadeva.[7]

The fear of sin-transference through the acceptance of gift, perhaps also accounts for the postulation of the rule that only under very special circumstances gift-objects may be accepted by those brāhmaṇas

[1] *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 75.22. '*guhyo hyayam sarvalokasya dharmanemom dharma yatra tatra prajalpeta.*'

[2] Ibid., 85.13.

[3] *Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, II.4.9.8. '*sarvanyudakapurvāni dānāni*; *Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, V.19; 'A gift of food shall be preceded by libation of water.'

[4] J. Hastings, *ERE*, vol. X, p. 464. 'Water may be used possibly to some extent in symbolical sense, as the final mark of separation from a previous state at a critical stage in the life history of the individual.'

[5] *Cullakasetthi Jāt.*, vol. I, no. 4, p. 17; *Sujātā Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 306, p. 14; *Śaṅkha Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 442, p. 10; *Daśa-brāhmaṇa Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 495, p. 231; *Mahāummagga Jāt.*, vol. VI, no. 546, p. 171.

[6] *Dh. Pada*, III.16.9; *Kurudhamma Jāt.*, vol. II, no. 276, p. 254. 'Then he put the trunk (of the elephant) into the brahmin's hands, he besprinkled him with scented water from a fine golden vase and made him over to him. The brahmins accepted the elephants with all his belonging.'

[7] Mathura Lion Capital Ins., *CII*, II, pt. I, pp. 48-49.

who possess sufficient spiritual merit to counteract the adverse effects of the gift. According to Vaśiṣṭha learned brāhmaṇas through sacrificing for wicked people or 'through accepting their gifts' do not contact guilt, for a learned brāhmaṇa resembles fire and sun.[1] But if a brāhmaṇa who is devoid of all ascetic virtues and is unread in the *Vedas*, were to accept a gift he would be drowned with its donor, like a stone raft with its rider.[2] Nevertheless, there had grown so much faith in the brāhmaṇas' spiritual prowess to effectively counterbalance any sin entailed in the act of *pratigraha* that Manu declares: 'He who, when in danger of losing his life accepts food from any person whatsoever is no more tainted by sin than the sky by mud.'[3]

The fear that the gift may be revoked, in case the donor later happened to change his mind, seems to have further occasioned the need for giftmaking procedure. As our data shows, it was the growing popularity of gift-items of a more lasting value such as land which made gifts an important means of begetting property.[4] Such gifts also raised serious legal problems pertaining to property right and inheritance, especially caused by recision of gifts.[5] Dāna during the period under study therefore is found to be more in the nature of a covenant,[6] bound and governed by gradually evolving juristic stipulations. In the later law-books we come across a detailed exposition of gifts.[7] Kauṭilya too takes due note of the legal implications of dāna and its resumption vis-a-vis property right.[8] Our sources reveal that giftmaking procedure helped to perpetuate and secure the donee's newly acquired ownership right over the gift-object. It imbued the act of dāna with a mystical aspect. It gave to it a sacrosanct character which instilled in the donor a strong religious fear of divine reprisal in case the gift was revoked by him.[9]

Much of giftmaking procedural ritualism as projected in the contemporary *Dharamaśāstra* texts would be found to be charged with a

[1] *Vaś. Dh. Sūt.*, XXVII.9.

[2] *Manu*, IV.190.

[3] Ibid., X.104.

[4] *Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, X.39.

[5] J. Duncan M. Derrett, *Religion, Law and the State in India*, p. 91.

[6] K.P. Jayaswal, *Manu and Yājñavalkya—A Comparison and a Constrast*, p. 285.

[7] *Manu*, VIII.212-14; *Nārada Smṛ.*, IV.1-12; Julius Jolly, *Hindu Law and Custom*, p. 227; K.V.R. Aiyangar, Vyavahāra Kāṇḍa of *Kṛtyakalpataru of Lakṣmidhara*, Intro., pp. 54-55.

[8] *AŚ.*, III.16.I.9; U.C. Sarkar, *Epochs in Hindu Legal History*, p. 91.

[9] *Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 61.71-72.

deep symbolism supposedly wielding magico-religious efficacy. The incantation of specially worded formulas, the pouring of water, the act of circumambulation, the offering of dakṣiṇā were all apparently symbolic rites, meant to emphasise both the primordial religious character of dāna as well as its predominantly super-mundane aspect so that its revocation could be fraught with grievous repercussions for the donor.

The brahmanical law-givers capitalising on the prevailing popular belief in occultism,[1] magical rites,[2] the efficacy of pronouncements of curse and benediction as well as people's credulity in stories of terrible sufferings in different purgatories[3] and other blind superstitions,[4] went to the extent of pronouncing not only gifts made to brāhmaṇas but the latter's property in general, as completely taboo. According to one of the *Smṛti* texts: "One should never cherish an inclination for a brāhmaṇa's property even if his vital breath comes up to the throat, for a brāhmaṇa's property (verily) is spoken of as poison. Poison kills only one man (who takes it) but a brāhmaṇa's property destroys even his son and grandson."[5]

Next to the fear of the occult and the divine, it was the fear of social disapprobation which could act as an effective deterrant in restraining the donor from revoking the gift. The act of *pratigraha* being made into a social event, with a virtual public declaration of the gift by the donor and its formal acceptance by the donee, its revocation could easily mean a loss of face for the former. Yājñavalkya clearly enjoins: "Let the acceptance be public, especially of immoveable property, and after having delivered what may be given and has been promised, let not a man resume it."[6] According to Kātyāyana also:

[1]*Dīg. Nik.*, Brahmajāla Sutta; B.C. Law, 'Ancient India in Buddhist Text', *K.B. Pathak Commemoration Vol.*, 1934, p. 76. 'The mass of the people believed in spells, incantations, charms and spirits.'

[2]*AŚ.*, V.313; XIII.1.9.12; IV.3.209, 210; R.P. Kangle, *The Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra*, pt. III, pp. 158-60; B.N. Datta, *DHR*, p. 293.

[3]*PV*, I.9.3; B.C. Law, *IDETBJ*, pp. 208, 239.

[4]*Hir. Gṛ. Sūt.*, I.5.17.4. 'With these he sacrifices . . . if he has seen a bad dream'; *Mahā-Maṅgala Jāt.*, vol. 4, no. 453; Aśoka's R.E. IX, *SI*, vol. I, Bk. I, no. 14, p. 28; G.S.P. Misra, *The Age of Vinaya*, p. 194 (Belief in omens and *maṅgalas*); *Gagga Jāt.*, vol. II, no. 155, p. 11, (ref. to the sneezing superstition); *Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, XI.15. 'He shall also take heed of that which astrologers and interpreters of omens tell (him).'

[5]*Bṛ. Smṛ.*, 45-47.

[6]*Yāj. Smṛ.*, II.179. '*dattvā nāpahareta punaḥ.*'

"Having addressed saying 'I make this present unto him,' one should give away (a present); if without asking this, one gives (a present) to a qualified person, it yields no fruit."[1]

Procedure also aimed at emphasising the irrevocable and contractual nature of dāna.[2] It vested the latter with the validity of a formal legal deed. Giftmaking procedure in the *Dharmaśāstras*, seems to have comprised two distinct stages, viz. (i) resolution or formal pledge (*saṅkalpa*) to make the gift and (ii) the act of actual bestowal of the gift-object accompanied with dakṣiṇā.[3] The two consecutive dates (Śaka year 41-42 and 45) of making donation recorded in the Nasik Cave Inscription of Nahapāṇa may perhaps refer, as suggested by Senart, to "two different stages of the same proceeding; the first characterised by *datta*, the second by *niyukta*."[4] The former term *datta*, according to Bhagwan Lal corresponds to *saṅkalpita* or the resolution to give.[5]

Even the promise to make gift carried the same force and validity as a gift already conferred. This is apparent from Kātyāyana's dictum that if a man of his own free will promises a gift to a brāhmaṇa, but does not carry out that promise he becomes a debtor (to that brāhmaṇa) in this world and the next.[6] Although Gautama[7] and Manu[8] are sceptical regarding the validity of the promise to make gift to a person who is later found to be guilty of irreligious or improper conduct, Kātyāyana expressly states that if a dying man has promised a gift for religious purpose but dies before it is given away, then his son must give it.[9]

The increasingly elaborate and changing format of the post-Mauryan donative records also would seem to reflect the attempt at excluding all misgivings and disputes which could arise due to recision of gift or on account of rival claims over it by the donor's successors. Yājñavalkya stipulates: "When making gift of land, or making any permanent arrangement, he should have the terms

[1]*Kāt. Smṛ.*, XV.5.

[2]*Manu*, IX. 47.

[3]P.V. Kane, *Hist. Dh. S.*, II, pt. II, p. 892.

[4]Nasik Cave Ins. of Nahapāṇa, *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 58; *EI*, VIII, pp. 84-85.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Kātyāyana quoted by Aparārka, p. 783. '*svechaya yaḥ pratiśrutya brāhmaṇāya pratigrahaṃ, na dadyādṛṇavadvapyaḥ prāpnuyat pūrva sahasaṃ.*' Vide, P.V. Kane, *Hist. Dh.*, II, pt. II, p. 886.

[7]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, V.21.

[8]*Manu*, VIII.212.

[9]*Kāt. Smṛ.*, II.1-4.

committed to writing for the information of the future good king."[1] To avoid any kind of ambiguity the names of three generations of both the donor and the donee, as well as the quantity of the gift (the boundary line of the land) and the date were also required to be duly specified on a canvas or on a copper-plate bearing the signature and the seal of the king.[2]

The surest safeguard against gift recision (i.e. permanently ending the donor's ownership right over the gift-object) was to make sure that the donor was in a placid, pleasant and pious state of mind so that he was not later assailed by doubts or regret. Much of dāna making ritual it seems was really meant to serve a psychological purpose of inducing in the donor a proper and receptive frame of mind.[3]

Procedural Overgrowth Due to Transposition of Sacrificial Ritualism

Much of dāna making procedural overgrowth would appear to have its genesis in the sacrificial ritualism of Vedic times. We may recall how the supersession of pastoral order by agricultural economy in the post-Vedic period had resulted in the cult of sacrifice becoming increasingly replaced by dāna.[4] The contemporary texts contain numerous joint notices of sacrifices and gifts, thereby emphasising their inter-changeable character.[5] They also project them as common constituents of an important religious rite.[6] During the post-Vedic

[1]*Yāj. Smṛ.*, I.318.

[2]*Bṛ. Smṛ.*, VII.12-18; *Yāj. Smṛ.*, I.31.9-320; *Viṣ. Smṛ.*, III.57-58. "He shall make gifts of land as king, either on parchment or on a copper plate. He shall make the deed of gift mentioning the names of the three generations of those whom (such gifts are made), of three generations of his own family, the measurement and the boundaries, stamped with his own seal, for the information of the succeeding kings."

[3]*PV*, I.9.48. "Just before bestowing the gift, one should be happy; while giving it, he should make his heart rejoice; after giving he becomes joyful." Ibid., I.9.42, *Sut. Nip.* III.5.20; *HD*, Verse 163; *Mayhaka Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 390, "Give gift, and give it cheerfully. Never regret the giving while you live." *Dasaṇṇaka Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 401, p. 209.

[4]*Supra*, Brāhmaṇas as gift-receivers, p. 95.

[5]*Manu*, IV.226; 227; *Viṣ. Smṛ.*, 59.28; *Sut. Nip*, III.4; Westermarck, *Origin and Development of Moral Ideas*, p. 566, "In other cases we find that almsgiving is regarded as a form of sacrifice or takes the place of it. In the sacred books of India the two things are repeatedly mentioned side by side."

[6]Narendra Wagle, 'Minor Rites and Rituals attributed to the Brāhmaṇas in the *Nikāya* texts of the Pāli Canon', *JOIB*, XVII, 1967-68. "It is stated that having killed an animal for the dead, the performer of the rite distributes the whole animal limb by limb."

period, since the institution of dāna seems to have distended mainly to replace sacrifices,[1] the transposition of much of sacrificial ritualism to dāna was quite natural and inevitable. The payment of dakṣiṇā at the conclusion of the dāna making act would seem to be adopted directly from the sacrificial cult.[2]

Economic Exigency Conditioning Giftmaking Procedure

In the post-Vedic social milieu, with the religious scene as much dominated by heterodox religions as by Brahminism, we cannot confine our study of giftmaking procedure to merely religious rites connected with the more personal and direct bestowal of gift by the donor to the donee. Our sources reveal wide ranging procedural formations during the period under study. We come across special procedure adopted on the occasion of (i) gifts made on excessively large scale by the kings and other rich donors;[3] (ii) gift-distribution lasting for several days;[4] (iii) alms-distribution at the donor's own residence;[5] or (iv) undertaken through the institution of alms-halls;[6] (v) gift-offerings to the *Saṁgha*, deposited there by the donor himself;[7] (vi) or by inviting the monks to partake them at his own residence;[8] (vii) or even distributing them through the ticket system;[9] (viii) gifts were also made by bequeathing income drawn from a piece of agricultural land to meet the regular expenses of a monastery or some charitable

[1]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 60.9; 61.18.

[2]Ibid., 57.30.

[3]*Vessantara Jāt.*, vol. VI, no. 547; *Mbh.*, Sabhā Parva, 30.51; *Mbh.*, Āśramavāsika Parva, 20.3-4.

[4]*Dh. pada*, vol. III, 17.3, p. 103. ". . . and for the space of seven days he gave alms to the congregation of monks." *Therigāthā*, LXIV. Uppalavanna, p. iii. "And she gave great gifts for seven days to the Buddha and the order." *VV*, First Chair Mansion, 1.1. "King Pasenadi of Kośala had inaugurated for seven days unparalleled alms-giving for the order of the monks."

[5]*Mayhaka Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 390, p. 187.

[6]*Supra*, Origins of Beggary, p. 110.

[7]*MV*, VIII.5.1. "At that time people went to the *ārāma* with robes (which they intended to present to the bhikkhus." *Visavanta Jāt.*, vol. I, no. 69, p. 167. ". . . folks came to the monastery with a quantity of such cakes for the Brotherhood."

[8]*MV*, VI.251. "At that time a certain minister had invited the fraternity of bhikkhus with Buddha at its head for the next day." Ibid., VI-35.5.

[9]*Dh. Pada.*, Bk. 11, Story 1, "From that time on she gave regularly the eight ticket food and from that time on eight monks came regularly to her house." Ibid., Bk. 24, Story 7; *Mahā Sutasoma Jāt.*, vol. V, no. 537, p. 259. "He started distribution of milk by tickets." *VV.*, Sirima's Mansion, I.17. "And had begun to give alms daily to eight members of the order chosen by lot."

institution; (ix) or through investing a sum of money with a commercial guild and entrusting it with the task of providing a regular grant to the donee out of the interest raised on the capital; (x) gifts to the *bhikkhus* are also known to be sometimes made jointly by the residents of a street or a township.[1]

With the *pūrta* category of gifts becoming increasingly popular during the post-Mauryan period, distinct procedural formations also came to be adopted in the case of installation of images, gateways;[2] digging of wells and tanks;[3] planting of trees etc.[4] Some of these forms of giftmaking have been mentioned in the *Vimuttimagga* (a text belonging to the first-second century A.D.): "To partake of food given to the order as a whole (*Saṁgha-bhatta*), of assured food (*niccabhatta*), of ticket food (*śalākābhatta*), of food offered to many (*gaṇabhatta*), and of food given in honour of a monastery (*vihāra-bhatta*)."[5]

The procedural ritual applicable to personally made gifts to brāhmaṇas could hardly be expected to be valid for the above forms of giftmaking. In the case of the latter it would be found that besides socio-religious beliefs, it was mainly economic expediency arising out of urbanised living and the growth of trade and money economy which occasioned variations in the giftmaking procedure. How improvements were effected in the mode of alms-distribution to suit the

[1]Bharhut Ins., *Lüd.* no. 705; *Duddada Jāt.*, vol. II, no. 180, p. 59; *Kuṇḍakapava Jāt.*, vol. 1, no. 109, p. 252; *Mahā Panāda Jāt.*, vol. II, no. 264, p. 229. "The town folk on the following day collected magnificent gifts for Buddha and his attendant Brethren." *Susima Jāt.*, vol. II, no. 163, p. 31.

[2]Mathura Jain Image Ins. (of Huviṣka), *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 52, (*Datta pratimā*): Mathura Bud. Image Ins., *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 54. (*pratimā pratiṣṭhāpitā*).

[3]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 64.3; *Buddhacharita*, II.12, tr., p. 22; *VV*, Revati Mansion, V.2.92, p. 89. "Parks will I plant and mend bad roads. And tanks and wells I will make with pious heart." *Saṁ. Nik.*, vol. I, V.7; Mathura Stone Ins. (of Soḍaṣa), *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 26, p. 121; Nasik Cave Ins., *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 59, p. 169.

[4]Panjtar Stone Ins. (of a Kuṣāṇa king), *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 32, pp. 150-51. "And therein my gift (are) two trees." Hāthigumpha Cave Ins. (of Khāravela), *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 91, p. 226. "(He) gives with foliage *kalpa* (wish fulfilling trees)." (*pallava kalpa vṛkṣa*). Nāsik Cave Ins., *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 53, p. 164. "And at the village of Chikhalapadra in the Kapura district have been given eight thousand stems of coconut trees." (*dattam nārikelānām mūla sahasrāni aṣṭa*).

[5]Path of Freedom, *Vimuttimagga*, tr., p. 36.

donor's convenience may be seen from the *Dhammapada*. It records how a daughter, who was greatly disturbed by the din caused by the alms-seekers at her father's refectory, suggested a novel plan to keep the noise down. "Father, put a fence around the refectory and hang two gates through which the people may pass in and out, allowing only sufficient space for one person to pass through at a time. Then direct the people to pass in through one gate and out through the other. If you do this they will receive their alms peaceably and quietly . . . From that time on there was no more tumult in the refectory."[1] That economic conditions played a decisive role in shaping rituals is borne out by the case study of the *chamārs* undertaken by Henry H. Preslar. According to him, "the poor *chamārs* seldom perform a ritual, because in India rituals take artefacts and ingredients that cost money. So that whenever a ritual is performed ostensibly for the goddesses, the *chamārs* usually eat most of the offerings themselves."[2]

Even in the case of more traditionalised form of dāna to brāhmaṇas, one wonders whether, in the context of money economy which was so much in evidence by post-Mauryan times, the growing emphasis on the ritualistic practice of paying dakṣiṇā along with dāna[3] (mostly in the form of gold[4] or coined money) was more to cover the contingency expenses incurred by the donee rather than for the sake of any mystical reason. These contingency expenses could be in the nature of transport charges to and from the donor's residence, cartage of the gift object, or even for fuel needed by the donee for cooking cereals received in dāna.

Fresh economic expediencies arising out of increased commercial and religious traffic on the highways would also account for the growing popularity of the practice of building alms-house.[5] We learn how dānaśālās or sattraśālās were constructed at the city gates or at other vantage points in the city,[6] where alms entailing a fixed expendi-

[1]*Dh. Pada*, Bk. 2, Story. 1.

[2]Henry H. Preslar, 'Religion as Functions of Life Situation', *MI*, XXXIX, 1959, p. 295.

[3]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, 57.30.

[4]Ibid., 73.7. "For the sake of fee gold is doubtlessly said to be the best. Ibid., 73.9. '*suvarṇaṃ dakṣiṇā parā*.' 'Gold is the best fee.'

[5]*Dīg. Nik.*, III. Ambattha Sutta, II.4.

[6]*Dh. Pada*, vol. III, 16.9, p. 93. ". . . and likewise established at the door of his house regular distribution of cooked food to the poor folk and travellers." *Kurudhamma Jāt.*, vol. II, no. 276, p. 253. ". . . came with a great company to the alms-hall at the eastern gate."

ture[1] could be distributed in a duly organised manner.[2] Characteristic of the organised nature of the newly emergent urban life was the manner in which perpetual meals for the *Saṁgha* were instituted by lay devotees or the way[3] in which the residents of a whole street or city used to club together to make gifts of cooked food or other articles to the *bhikkhus*. According to the *Duddada Jātaka*,[4] "the people were all glad to give him their alms. They clubbed together and made a collection and provided plenty for the band of anchorites." The *Kāsāva Jātaka* informs, "At that time the citizens of Rājgaha used to club together for the proposed alms-giving."[5] Such a practice may even be regarded an extension of the organised character of the heterodox monastic orders.[6] Besides suggesting the extent to which organised efforts were made to meet the changed economic conditions, it might also be reminiscent of the collective ideology of the Vedic tribal order.

Giftmaking procedure involving the deposition of a fixed capital with some guild, with only the interests accruing to the beneficiary[7]

[1]*Vessantara Jāt.*, vol. VI, no. 547, p. 250. "... that each day she might distribute 600,000 pieces."

[2]Mathura Stone Ins., *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 49. "From the interest therefrom hundred brāhmaṇas should be served in the open hall ... on the same day three *adhaka* groats, one *prastha* salt, one *prastha* saku, three *ghaṭaka* and five *mallaka* of green vegetable bundles. This should be given for the sake of destitute people, hungry and thirsty."

[3]*VV*, Slave Woman's Mansion, I.18, p. 35. "He said to the Superintendent of meals, Revrend Sir, I have appointed four perpetual meals for the order. From tomorrow on let the worthy gentlemen come to my house"; ibid., Door Keepers Mansion, V.55, p. 94; *CV*, IV.4.6., p. 10. "Now at that time a certain householder possessed of good food, used to give perpetual alms to the *Saṁgha*, a meal for four *bhikkhus*."

[4]*Duddada Jāt.*, vol. II, no. 180, p. 59.

[5]*Kāsāva Jāt.*, vol. II, no. 221, p.138; *Lüd*, nos. 195; 401; 571, 625; *Susima Jāt.*, vol. II, no 163, p. 31.

[6]Bharhut Bud. Pillar Ins., *Lüd.*, no. 782; Junnar Bud. Cave Ins., *Lüd.*, no. 1153, p. 131; *Kuṇḍakapava Jāt.* vol. I, no. 109, p. 252 "Now at Sāvatthi, the Brotherhood with the Buddha at their head used to be entertained now by a body of people or a whole street would club together or sometimes the whole city entertained." *MV*, I.30, p. 122. "At that time an arrangement had been made at Rājagaha that the *bhikkhus* were to receive excellent meals successively (in the house of different rich *upāsakas*)."

[7]Nāsik Bud. Cave Ins., *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 58, p. 164. "And those *Kahāpaṇas* are not to be repaid, their interest only to be enjoyed, out of them the two thousand of one *pratika* per cent are cloth money; out of them to every one of the twenty monks who keep the *Vassa* in my cave, a cloth money of twelve (*kahāpāṇas*)." Mathura Stone Ins., *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 49.

was apparently in keeping with the growing commercial preoccupation of the contemporary society. It also suited the newly arisen economic interests and needs of a new category of donors, namely the rich merchants and big business magnates. Construction of alms-halls and the system of distributing alms through ticket system likewise served to meet the needs of a new category of donee viz., the ever-expanding group of heterodox monks and indigent alms-seekers. The recommendation of gift made at holy places as wielding greater efficacy, would similarly appear to be prompted by the vested interests of the sacerdotal class, which apparently stood to gain by it.

Gifts made on an inordinately large scale must have also made it incumbent on the donor to engage the services of large number of officers and servants. From the *Mahābhārata* we learn how "tellers and scribes on that occasion under the orders of Yudhiṣṭhira ceaselessly asked the old king, 'Do thou command, O Monarch, what gifts should be made to these. All things are ready here.' As soon as the king spoke they gave away what he directed."[1] Elsewhere in the same Epic we come across the following account: "A large number of men ... taking innumerable vessels in their hands distributed the food unto the regenerate classes by hundreds and thousands. The attendants of the Pāṇḍava gave away unto the brāhmaṇas diverse kind of food and drink."[2] According to the *Dhammapada* food was presented to the recluse at the door of a rest-house by novices and probationers.[3] Similarly from a passage of the *Keśava Jātaka* we learn how "the king's ministers dispense the food."[4]

In the epigraphs belonging to Mauryan and post-Mauryan time we get allusions to officers exclusively deputed with the task of administering royal donations. From one of the pillar edicts of Aśoka we learn how "both these and many other chief (officers)" were occupied with the delivery of the gifts made by the emperor as well as by the queens.[5] According to one of the Nāsik Cave Inscriptions under king Krisṇa of the Sātavāhana family, the cave was caused to be made by

[1]*Mbh.*, Āśramavāsika Parva, 20.7-8.

[2]Ibid., Aśvamedhika Parva, 87.61. *Rāmā*, Bālakāṇḍa, XIV, p. 35. "Then the assisting priest placed all the king's gifts before the holy sages Vasiṣṭha and Ṛṣyaṛṅga and begged them to distribute them."

[3]*Dh. Pada.*, Bk. 11, Story 9..

[4]*Keśava Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 346, p. 94.

[5]Delhi Topra P.E., VII, *CII*, I, p. 136.

the officer incharge of the *śramaṇas* at Nāsik.[1] The Manikiāla Stone Inscription refers to the general Lāla, the scion of the Ghuṣān race, the donation master of the Kṣatrapa Vespāsi.[2] The references to these officers would perhaps suggest that during the centuries following the Christian era[3] a certain amount of slow transformation had overtaken the giftmaking institution especially in the case of land grants, lifting it from a social and ritualistic plane to that of a more bureaucratised administrative one.

Pūrta Category of Dāna Occasioning a Distinct Procedure

The dedication of wells, tanks, alms-houses, *vihāras* or even the gift of trees, must have necessarily entailed considerable planning and effort on the part of the donor before the gift could be finally made. Even the length of time required to make such gifts would be relatively more than needed to make gifts of common items such as food and clothing etc. With regard to the *pūrta* category of dāna, therefore, it would be natural to presume that a distinct procedural form must have developed. Some idea about the changed procedure may be had from the notices we get of donees themselves proffering help in the construction of this category of gift-items. Thus we learn from the Buddhist texts how it was common for lay-donors to furnish for the construction of a *caitya* or a *vihāra* the requisite funds to the *Saṁgha*, while the actual construction work was superintended by the members of the order themselves.[4]

Our sources reveal that *pūrta* category of gifts had gained increasing popularity during the post-Mauryan period. But the giftmaking ritual connected with it was still to evolve fully and acquire the final shape which it assumed in the subsequent period. The ritual pertaining to installation of images, pillars, gateways, or to the construction and dedication of wells, reservoirs etc. in the later period came to be treated under the heading *pratiṣṭhā* as distinct from dāna. The former is generally taken to mean 'divesting oneself of ownership over a thing and dedicating it for the use of all'.[5] The various stages in the procedure of *pratiṣṭhā* are *saṅkalpa, homa, utsarga* (i.e. declaration that the thing has been dedicated), *dakṣiṇā* and the feeding of brāhmaṇas.

[1]Nāsik Cave Ins. (of the time of Kriṣṇa), *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 75, p. 189.
[2]Manikiāla Stone Ins., *CII*, I, p. 150.
[3]D.C. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, pp. 79, 175, 255.
[4]*VV*, Monastery Mansion, IV.6.44.
[5]P.V. Kane, *Hist. Dh. S.*, II, pt. II, p. 892.

The distinct procedure adopted in the case of *pūrta* besides emhasising the technical difference between the two forms of giftmaking was also to make clear the legal position as far as the donor's right of ownership over the dedicated gift-item was concerned. As pointed out by Kane, there is a difference in the technical meaning of dāna and *utsarga*. "In the former the donor gives up his ownership over a thing, makes another the owner of it and cannot thereafter use it nor has he any control over it. When a man makes an *utsarga* he no doubt gives up his ownership, but he gives up the thing for the benefit of all "*sarvabhutebhyah*" and so the opinion of most writers is that he can as a member of the public make use of the thing dedicated by him, though there were a few authors who recommended that he should not do so."[1]

Procedural Rules Introduced to Serve Vested Interests

Procedure normally grows and crystallises with time. But for the period under study, it may not be possible to attribute all giftmaking procedural rules to only time bound traditions. Our data furnishes enough evidence to suggest that besides social traditions and economic expediency, it was certain strong prudential considerations or powerful vested interests which led to the framing and reframing of the giftmaking procedure. The malleability evident in the early procedural rules bears out the correctness of A.W. Malefijts' contention that rituals are designed both to express belief and bring about specific ends.[2] It would be found that the early Buddhist and Jaina alms-seeking rules were primarily introduced to serve certain definite ends.

A spirit of rivalry and competition amongst various donee groupings had become manifest during the post-Vedic period. This was mainly on account of brāhmaṇas becoming more dependent on dāna instead of sacrificial gift-offerings (which were now becoming increasingly discredited), and larger sections of population forsaking worldly life and joining the heterodox orders. Consequently there was a remarkable increase in the number of alms-seekers at this time. The members of different donee groups in order to establish their bonafide and superior claim to alms, were now compelled to impress the lay donors by their good behaviour. Rules to enforce good behaviour on the part of alms-seekers were framed by the leaders of various religious orders.

[1]P.V. Kane, *Hist. Dh. S.*, II, pt. II, p. 892.
[2]A.W. Malefijt, *Religion and Culture*, p. 189.

Most of the Buddhist and Jaina alms-seeking procedural rules were ostensibly framed to suit the donor's convenience and to win over his regard and approbation, so that his continued patronage could be ensured. Thus whereas Jaina monks were clearly enjoined to beg food from the householder only when the latter's dinner was ready,[1] the Buddhist *bhikkhus* were specifically asked by Buddha to render thanks and speak pleasantly to their hosts.[2] That such procedural conduct on the part of the monks produced instant results with their popularity soaring high, would be evident from the *Dhammapada:* "When the people heard the words of thanksgiving, they put forth the greater efforts, invited the monks to take meals in their houses and went about bestowing abundant offerings upon them."[3]

Alms-seeking conduct prescribed for the Buddhist monks: Monks candidly acknowledged their total dependence on alms. They sought to win the acclaim of their patrons by leading a life of continence and moral uprightness as well as by their general pleasant demeanour and correct mode of conducting themselves at the time of receiving alms.[4] According to a stipulation contained in the *Cullavagga:* "The alms given are to be eaten with mind alert, paying attention to the bowl . . . when eating the whole hand is not to be put in the mouth."[5] But even when they went in quest of alms the *bhikkhus* were emphatically enjoined by Buddha to seal their lips and proffer no request.[6] From another text we learn how Buddha advised his disciples to stand in silence and merely point to their alms-bowl.[7] In the *Majjhima Nikāya*, Buddha thus addressed the *bhikkhus:* "Such being your vocation and profession as recluse you must train yourself to embrace and show forth in your lives the recluses' path of duty so

[1] *Uttarāhhyāyana Sūtra,* II.30.

[2] *Dh. Pada,* vol. III, 19.8, p. 145; *Maj. Nik.,* LXIX.1.470. "He ought not to call on families either before or after the midday meal." *CV,* VIII.5.2.

[3] *Dh. Pada,* Bk. 10, Story 8.

[4] *Khantivadi Jāt.,* vol. III, no. 313, p. 26. "And he being pleased with the ascetic for the propriety of his deportment, brought him into the house and fed him with the food prepared for himself." *Siri Jāt.,* vol. II, no. 284, p. 280. "Next day on his begging rounds, he (recluse) came to the door of an elephant trainer. This man took a fancy to his ways and manners, fed him and gave him lodging in his own grounds, waiting upon him continuously."

[5] *CV,* VIII. 4.5; *Aṅg. Nik.,* IV.3.28. "Then again, a monk is content with any sort of alms-food and speaks in praise of such content."

[6] *Sut. Nip.,* III.11.32-33.

[7] *Mahāvastu,* tr. J.J. Jones, p. 419.

as to prove your vocation true and your profession a reality."[1] Similarly in the *Cullavagga*, along with a more detailed exposition of the correct mode of seeking alms, we also come across Buddha's special behest to the monks regarding extra care to be taken, so as not to reveal any over-anxiety on their part to receive alms: "He (the monk) should take notice whether she (the lady of the house) seems willing or not to give away. If she wipes a spoon or wipes or puts aside a dish, he should stand still, perceiving that she seems willing to give. After the food has been given, he should cover up the bowl with his robe and turn back slowly and carefully."[2] Commenting on the correct mode of *viñyapti* or seeking alms by the *bhikkhu* as enunciated in the *Milindapañho*, R. Spence Hardy observes: "It is forbidden to the priest to proclaim his purity or attainments to the householders in order that he may gain honour or gifts. When persons come to the temple, he may not go up to them, address them . . . nor is he allowed to be continuously pressing them and urging them to give."[3]

The heterodox monks were so mindful of the popular approval that not only such rules as those contained in the *Cullavagga*[4] and the *Patimokkha*[5] were purposely incorporated into the *Vinaya* disciplinary code but various procedural rules were even revised to show respect for and accommodate popular beliefs and practices. Thus in the *Cullavagga*, Buddha is said to have observed: "Laymen, O *bhikkhus*, are given to lucky phrases (*gihi bhikhava maṅgalika*). I allow you, O *bhikkhus* to reply, 'May you live long,' to laymen who say to you, 'long life to your reverence.'[6] In the same text we come across another reference of a similar nature: "Now at that time a certain woman who had miscarriage and had invited *bhikkhus* and spread cloth in their honour, said to them, 'Step, Sirs, over the cloth.' The

[1] *Maj. Nik.,* XI. Cula-assapura Sutta, I.281.

[2] *CV,* VIII.5.2.

[3] R. Spence Hardy, *Eastern Monachism,* p. 70.

[4] *CV,* V.26.1. The people murmured, were annoyed and indignant, saying, "How can the *Śākya-puttiya samanas,* when food is being given to them, take it so carelessly. Each single ball of rice is the result of hundredfold labour." "I allow you, O *bhikkhus,* whatever things falls when it is being given to you, yourselves to pick it up and eat it, that has been presented, O *bhikkhus,* by the givers."

[5] *Patimokkha,* Sanghadisesa Dhamma, X.13. "Should a *bhikkhu* dwell near a certain village or a town, leading a life hurtful to the laity and devoted to evil . . . then he should be asked by the other *bhikkhus* to leave the place at once."

[6] *CV,* V.33.3.

bhikkhus fearing to offend would not do so. 'Step, Sirs, over the cloth, for good luck's sake . . . .' "I allow you, O *bhikkhus*, when asked to do so for the sake of good luck to laymen to step over cloth laid down for ceremonial purposes."[1] Likewise Buddha, on learning that people were spreading it about that monks not knowing moderation were asking for many robes ('Will the recluses deal in the cloth trade or will they set up a shop?'), permitted that if a householder should invite a monk 'to make material for many robes, then at most (material for) an inner and upper robe should be accepted.'[2] That prudential considerations such as not causing discomfort to the donor figured prominently in the framing of alms-seeking rules is also evident from the following passage of the *Majjhima Nikāya:* "I remember once being out for alms after dark when a woman espied me for a flash, as she was scouring a pot and screamed out 'Woe is me: a goblin is after me'."[3]

Jaina alms-seeking disciplinary rules: Similarly the Jaina *bhikkhus* were not to point out by stretching the hand or pointing the finger to the houses of disagreeable, despised or antagonistic families, for in case those houses happened to catch fire or robbed by thieves then the people were likely to be suspicious of the *bhikkhus.*[4]

Brahmanical giftmaking ritual to promote the interests of sacerdotal class: Although the brahmanical giftmaking procedural rules also aimed at securing the same objective i.e. winning the patronage and approval of a numerically large group of benefactors, yet their attempts appear to have been more subtle. They were generally in the form of indoctrination of the donor through mystical, moral, magical and even superstitious beliefs. Instead of showing their abject dependence on gifts, the brāhmaṇas maintained an attitude of nonchalance and unbending hautuer. They could afford to do so mainly because of their other economic preoccupations as householders. Their dependence on gifts was never as complete as that of the heterodox monks.[5] Nevertheless, the very rise of the Mīmāṁsā School (during the later half of the period under study), which bred, defended and sustained giftmaking ritualism, was meant to act as a bulwark to the pretensions

[1] *CV,* V.21.4.
[2] *Vinaya* (Nissaggiya), VIII.1.
[3] *Maj. Nik.*, Latukikopana Sutta, I.448.
[4] S.B. Deo, *History of Jaina Monachism*, p. 308.
[5] R.W. Frazer, *Indian Thought: Past and Present.*

of the dominating priestly class. According to B.N. Datta, "the main aim of the Mīmāṁsā School was to safeguard the interests of the priestly class. It showed that the way to heaven lies in Vedic *karmakāṇḍa*, and that must be done by the priest."[1] An analysis of the contemporary giftmaking ritualism shows that much of it (especially some of the 'more remunerative rituals' such as gifts made at holy places and shrines or others which made it absolutely necessary for the donor to engage the services of a priest well versed in ritualistic lore),[2] was meant to enhance the chances of the sacerdotal class for 'surplus sharing'. It may have also helped to subvert the forces of reaction and change. The latter became manifest in the form of heterodox movements. Reaction and change had apparently set in as a result of developments in the field of iron technology and commercial enterprise and would have otherwise seriously undermined the advantageous and lucrative position enjoyed by the priestly class.

The unique aspect acquired by dāna on account of rich ritualistic overgrowth therefore was as much due to certain commonly held religious and social beliefs as it was in keeping with the changing social needs, the economic exigencies of the time as well as the vested interests of certain dominant donee and donor groupings.

[1] B.N. Datta, *DHR*, p. 316.
[2] R.N. Nandi, 'Some Sccial Aspects of the *Gṛhya Sūtra.*' *Proc. IHC*, 1977, p. 171.

CHAPTER 11

Ritualism and Social Stratification

ENTRENCHED VARṆA STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY

An analysis of our data clearly suggests that the institution of dāna had more or less a parallel development along with that of the *varṇa* system. Both institutions are found to be in their formative stages during the period under study. They had still not acquired that static maturity[1] nor had they become cast within that rigid mould which characterise them during the centuries following the Christian era.

The simultaneous growth of the two institutions shows they strongly interacted and considerably aided each other to evolve, expand and augment. The strong impact of the wide ranging *varṇa* restrictions on dāna making rules can scarcely be doubted. The injunction contained in the Buddhist text *Vimuttimāgga* (Ist-2nd century A.D.),[2] that the covering of his bowl by a monk on seeing an outcaste (*cāṇḍāla*) did not amount to the transgression of the alms-seeking rules clearly suggests that donor's qualifications had come to be so much governed by *varṇa* prejudices that even the leaders of heterodox sects could not remain totally indifferent to them. Their attempt to defy them is apparent from an earlier Buddhist ruling according to which when presenting gifts, a man of strong, active and well-trained mind should be selected as donee without reference to the fact of his being a *cāṇḍāla* or a *pukkusa*.[3]

[1]T.W. Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha* (*Dīgha Nikāya*), *SBB*, vol. II, p. 101. "What we find then, in the Buddha's time, is caste in the making. The great mass of the people were distinguished quite roughly into four classes—social strata—of which the boundary lines were vague and uncertain."

[2]*Path of Freedom* (*Vimuttimagga*), p. 36.

[3]T.W. Rhys Davids, '*Dialogues of the Buddha* (*Dīgha Nikāya*), *SBB*, II, p. 100.

Theoretical varṇa maxims transformed into actual practice through dāna ritualism: Dāna tended to transform the deliberately framed *varṇa* regulations from abstract aphorisms into actual rituals. The *Dharmaśāstra* writers in order to emphasise *varṇa* distinctions resting initially on hereditary specialisation, quite overtly prescribed *varṇa* based qualifications for donor and donee.[1] Thus Manu forbids the acceptance of gifts even from a king, if he happens to be a non-kṣatriya.[2] Viṣṇu includes service of the śūdra among sins rendering one unfit to receive alms, and requiring a penance for their expiation.[3] The observance of these Dharmaśāstric maxims in actual practice, therefore helped to intensify *varṇa* consciousness in everyday life. Even the Pāli literature[4] very explicitly vouches for the universal preference shown to the brāhmaṇas as donees. In the *Sutta Nipāta* we come across the candid avowal, 'on a brāhmaṇa no man closed his doors.'[5]

The stipulation contained in the *Mahābhārata* viz., 'a pious man should not make a gift to śūdras'[6] would appear to be scrupulously carried out in practice. In both brahmanical and heterodox canonical texts, we do not come across any specific instance of a *caṇḍāla* being offered gifts, even though notices of alms being given to destitute and infirm beggars are plentiful. The omission seems all the more significant when even in the *Mahābhārata* it is conceded that offerings to dogs and *caṇḍālas* are never totally devoid of all merit.[7] Interestingly even the enlightened Buddhist scholar Aśvaghoṣa acknowledges a śūdras' right to receive gifts only if the latter has crossed the dreadful ocean of five senses.[8]

Reinforced rule of commensality: *Varṇa* awareness in society must have been considerably boosted also by the observance of restrictions concerning the acceptance of cooked food from limited categories of donors. The observance of these rules would have directly reinforced, or atleast brought into sharper focus restrictions on commensality.

[1]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, V.20; *Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, III.6; *Baud. Dh. Sūt.*, II.3.5.19.

[2]*Manu*, IV.84.

[3]*Viṣ. Smṛ.*, XI.1-2, vide, U.N. Ghoshal, 'The Status of the Śūdras in the *Dharmasūtras*', *IC*, XIV, 1947-48.

[4]*Buddhacarita*, I.48; I.84; II.36.

[5]*Sut. Nip.*, II-7.5.

[6]*Mbh.*, Śānti Parva, 37.29.

[7]Ibid., Anuśāsana Parva, 62.13.

[8]*Vajrasuci*, tr. Sujit Kumar Mukhopadhyaya, p. 21.

The latter were tending to become, along with hereditary specialisation and endogamy, the dominant features of *varṇa*-system during the post-Mauryan period. This would be sufficiently apparent from the injunction contained in the *Mahābhārata* that the man who abandons his own proper occupation and betakes himself to that of a śūdra, should be considered a śūdra and on no account should any food be accepted from him.[1] It appears that if at all the heterodox orders succeeded in flouting *varṇa* rules it was primarily in the form of rejecting restrictions regarding commensality. Pāṇini uses the term *sarvānnina*[2] in the sense of a monk or a person who accepts all kinds of food on his begging rounds.[3]

The members of the Buddhist order went to the other extreme of accepting alms of cooked food even from people suffering from contagious diseases. In the *Therīgāthā* a donor 'with his hand all leperous and diseased', is described as putting in the monk's bowl 'a morsel just as one of his (the donor's) fingers broke and fell.'[4] Not all heterodox orders, however, could remain so completely immune to the notion of impurity attached to food. This is evident from the Jaina alms-seeking rules enunciated in the *Acarāṅga Sūtra*. According to the latter, perhaps on account of considerations pertaining chiefly to the principle of non-destruction of life, Jaina monks were not to accept food in the houses of kṣatriyas, kings and relations of kings, "whether they were inside or outside or had invited them, for such food is impure and unacceptable."[5]

Helped to augment hierarchical varṇa gradation: The institution of dāna to some extent also helped to augment and accentuate the hierarchical pattern of *varṇa* gradation. It seems to have greatly added to the social consequence of the brāhmaṇas, for they alone were rightfully entitled to receive dāna. 'As a channel of easy acquisition of merit'[6] they therefore gained added importance.

The institution of dāna, moreover, improved the economic competence of atleast a sizeable section of the brāhmaṇas, bringing it at par with their ritual status in society. Literature is replete with notices

[1]*Mbh.*, Anuśāsana Parva, CXXXV, tr., vol. XI, p. 284.
[2]*AA*, V.2.9.
[3]V.S. Agarwala, *India as Known to Pāṇini*, p. 383.
[4]*Therīgāthā*, Canto, XVI.261.
[5]*Acarāṅga Sūtra*, Bk. II, Lesson 3, *SBE*, XLV, p. 97.
[6]G.S. Ghurye, *Caste and Class in India*, p. 57.

of brāhmaṇas as recipients of large gifts[1] and as being immensely wealthy and prosperous.[2] Their ritual superiority and social rank had come to correspond increasingly to their economic propsperity and political influence. This is sufficiently evident from the *Dīgha Nikāya*,[3] *Sutta-piṭaka*[4] and the *Maccha Jātaka*. The Jātaka story tells how a brāhmaṇa priest, who had come to the riverside with his attendant slaves to bathe, when demanded his regular share of the fish hauled, was entreated by the fisherman to take any fish he might take fancy to.[5]

Similarly, the kṣatriya ruling class won the support of the learned brāhmaṇas[6] through bestowal of munificent gifts. The collaboration enabled the kṣatriyas to establish their high station in the *varṇa* hierarchy, next only to that of their sacerdotal collaborators. It is remarkable that during the centuries immediately preceding and following sixth century B.C., when the *varṇa* society had still not lost its initial pliancy, dāna making is found to be predominantly confined to brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas as the chief categories of donees and donors respectively. An analysis of the *Dharmaśāstra* texts further reveals that any transgression of *varṇa* rules could be expiated mainly through dāna made by the offender.[7] The institution of dāna therefore substantially helped to preserve the *varṇa* structure of society.

But more than anything else the institution of dāna appears to have been vital to the very ideology of a four-fold *varṇa* division of society. The latter required an entire stratum viz., that of the brāhmaṇas to subsist on economic means not earned through the pursuit of some craft or trade or even as remuneration for services rendered but purely on what was voluntarily offered out of appreciation and regard for their religious learning by the members of other *varṇas*.

[1]*Rāmā*, Ayodhyākāṇḍa, chap. 77, p. 328; ibid., Bālakāṇḍa, chap. 14, p. 35; *Junhā Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 456, p. 63; Udayagiri Cave Ins. (of Khāravela), *Lüd.*, no. 1345; Nāsik Cave Ins. (of Uṣavadāta), *Lüd.*, no. 1135; Nānāghāt Ins. (of Nāganikā), *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 82.
[2]*Therīgāthā*, LXVII, Rohini; *Dh. Pada*, Bk. 23, Story 3; *PV*, The story of Sariputta's mother, Bk. II.2; *Śaṅkha Jāt*, vol. IV, no. 442, p. 9; *Culla Bodhi Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 443, p. 14.
[3]*Dīg. Nik.*, IV, Sonadanda Sutta, I; III. Ambattha Sutta, I.2; IV. Kutadanta Sutta, V.1.1.
[4]*Sut. Nip.*, V.1.3.
[5]*Maccha Jāt.*, vol. I, no. 34, p. 87.
[6]*Supra*, Royal Donors, p. 45.
[7]*Vas. Dh. Sūt.*, XXV.3.

Although neither all brāhmaṇas manifested the same amount of spiritual dignity and intellectual eminence nor they could subsist solely on dāna and had to take to other pursuits yet the majority of brāhmaṇas despite their non-brahmanical vocations continued to be offered food and gifts on the occasion of *śrādha* and other sacramental rites.

The institution of dāna and *varṇa* system were, in fact, complementary institutions. If the former was deeply coloured by the prevailing *varṇa* structure of society, the peculiar aspect of *varṇa* system as it developed in post-Vedic times, was made practicable only through the wide prevalence of the gift-making institution. The latter perhaps even added a certain measure of flexibility to the *varṇa* order in the post-Gupta period. At a time when progressive growth had given way to static rigidity, any social mobility which was possible within the *varṇa* matrix was only in the form of caste elevation. This could be achieved through ostentatious gifts made to the custodians of social order, namely the brāhmaṇas. Several instances of such *varṇa* upgrading have been recorded in modern times, and the possibility of the institution of dāna performing a similar function in the earlier period also cannot be ruled out.

Gave Rise to Class Stratification

In one of his essays on caste-system, Celestin Bougle contends that no institution, religious or social, which did not have a supportive bearing towards caste-system could survive for long in Indian social milieu.[1] The generalisation, as Bougle has endeavoured to prove, may hold good in the case of Buddhism[2] and more so even though in a different and more positive manner in the case of dāna making institution. But even while the supportive role played by the latter is strongly manifested, yet a close scrutiny of our data suggests that the giftmaking institution to some extent also tended to cut across the *varṇa* basis of society by promoting economic class stratification.

The dynamics of dāna making institution helped to strengthen and

[1]Celestin Bougle, *Essays on Caste-System*, p. 68, "The proof lies in the unparalleled authority with which it (caste-system) weighs in India. All that can serve it prospers there. All that could hurt it, perishes."

[2]Ibid., p. 73.

sustain the *varṇa* social order so long as the latter remained mainly an occupational stratification[1] which perhaps suited the simple self-sufficient economy of pre-Buddhist times.[2] But better mode of production resulting from increased use of iron must have subsequently created not only a larger surplus but also the need to organise and arrange for the distribution of this surplus. The emergence of a class of organisers and managers as distinct from the producers, therefore, became inevitable.[3] Clear evidence of an open collaboration between the ruling and the priestly class are forthcoming from our sources.[4]

It eventually led to the formation of a new socially influential bloc wielding both wealth and authority. But since it tended to be a more exclusive or an elite group it corresponded increasingly less to the *varṇa* grouping to which its components originally belonged. We find, in fact, two more or less clearly demarcated though naturally flexible economic groupings cutting right across the fourfold *varṇa* division. Firstly there were the producers, who although mostly belonged to the śūdra and vaiśya *varṇas*, were none the less drawn from the two higher strata as well. On the other hand we come across the extremely prosperous organisers and managers of production, represented by the rich landowning brāhmaṇas,[5] kṣatriya nobles and subsequently vaiśya merchants and *setthis*. The organisers, through coercion and custom based authority so controlled the means of production as to expropriate all social surplus to themselves, forcing the producers, despite all their labour and specialised skill, to live in a state of near privation.[6] Notices of rich craftsmen producers and farmers, although not totally lacking, are however very rare.

Non-varṇa character of the ruling stratum: The organiser group as distinct from the class of producers could not be expected to con-

[1]Suvira Jaiswal, 'Caste in the Socio-economic Framework of Early India', Presidential address, Section I, *Pro. IHC*, 1977, p. 33.

[2]D.D. Kosambi, 'Marxist Approch to Indian Chronology', *ABORI*, XXX, p. 263.

[3]A. Ghosh, *CEHI*, p. 20.

[4]*AŚ*, II.1.7.

[5]*Kassaka-brāhmaṇas*, cf., Fick, *Soc. Org.*, p. 243; *Mahāsāla-brāhmaṇas*, cf., B.C. Law, *IDETBJ*, p. 161.

[6]D.D. Kosambi, *An Intro.*, p. 110; G.M. Bongard Levin, *Some problem*, p. 215; Jaimal Rai, *Rural Urban Economy*, p. 319. "This differentiation within the tribe paved the way to a class society wider than the tribe, where the priests and warrior castes united to repress and exploit the aryan peasant (vaiśya) and non-aryan helot (śūdra)."

form to the *varṇa* stratification. This becomes evident from the way the brāhmaṇas, on account of this growing economic segmentation, could not remain a single integrated class. As discussed elsewhere[1] they soon became split into two distinct sections. Our sources reveal that it was only a coterie of learned brāhmaṇas (*śrotriyas*) who not only exclusively adhered to the intellectual and sacerdotal pursuits prescribed for them, but who alone were equipped to help the ruling stratum in the task of organising production. The rest of the brāhmaṇas, having no pretensions to learning, were naturally forced to adopt other non-brahmanical pursuits. Hence they largely appertained to the class of producers.

That these economic classes viz. the producers and the ruling stratum were divorced from *varṇa* stratification may further be seen from the fact that even śūdras such as the Nanda kings, once they acquired political power and wealth, fell as much in the surplus-grasping organiser category as any wealthy *śrotriya* brāhmaṇa or kṣatriya noble. The Nandas in order to secure validation for their political power are equally heard of as patronising the sacerdotal class. According to the *Uttarādhyāyana Ṭīkā* of the *Bhagawati Sūtra* the brāhmaṇas were honoured by the Nandas of Pāṭaliputra with gifts of wealth and various costly articles.[2]

The non-*varṇa* character of the ruling stratum is duly emphasised in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (a text belonging to the period much later than that under study). According to it whoever possessed horses, elephants, chariots and wealth managed to become the king.[3] This would be borne out by the instance of those ruler-organisers of foreign racial stock, who were originally not drawn from the *varṇa* order but had been only subsequently assigned a position in the *varṇa* matrix, perhaps as a result of their collaboration with the sacerdotal elite. The brāhmaṇas not only sought to assign to these foreigners a place in the Indian hierarchical social order, but also accorded them the right to make minor sacrificial and other sacramental offerings to brāhmaṇas. Thus Manu has given to such foreigners the status of degraded kṣatriyas.[4] Gautama regards the Yavanas as the offsprings of a marriage between kṣatriya and a śūdra woman.[5] The *Mahābhārata* declares

[1] *Infra*, p. 241-45.
[2] cf., J.C. Sikdar, *Studies in the Bhagawati Sūtra*, p. 157.
[3] *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, VI.1.34.
[4] *Manu*, X.43-44.
[5] *Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, I.4.17.

the Śakas, Yavanas, Tuśāras and Pahlavas to be eligible for the performance of Vedic religious acts and minor sacrifices.[1] These dictates were apparently not confined merely to theory but were actually put into practice. This is sufficiently evident from the marriage that took place between the daughter of Mahā-kṣatrapa Rudradāman and the Sātavāhana king Vāśiṣṭiputra, who was a staunch Brahmanist.[2] The fact, that brāhmaṇas accepted gifts from these foreigners is proved beyond doubt by the Nāsik inscription of Uṣāvadāta wherein munificent gifts to the brāhmaṇas are recorded.

The role of dāna making institution in the formation of an influential organiser class was, in fact, important in more than one way. Once a governmental apparatus wielding fiscal powers had been developed for the appropriation of the surplus, the two chief means to divert surplus from the producers (besides the profit made through trade by economic entrepreneurs) were: (i) tax impositions directly claimed by the rulers and (ii) dāna which gradually tended to be more in the nature of obligatory religious defrayment to the members of the priestly order who had come to serve as the 'ideological apologist'[3] of the ruling stratum. The various *Gṛhya* rituals, especially those pertaining to giftmaking, would seem to be directly aimed at enlarging the scope of the sacerdotal class for sharing the economic surplus possessed by prosperous house-holders.[4]

Giving rise to class-stratification, through promoting collaboration between the power elite and the intellectual elite and by facilitating the concentration of surplus in their hands would therefore appear to be an important outcome of the widespread practice of dāna.

Created social tension within the brāhmaṇa varṇa: But a more positive effect of the institution was the affluence gained by a section of the brāhmaṇas, often described as *mahāsāla* in the contemporary Pāli texts.[5] As seen above brāhmaṇas versed in the Vedic lore and speci-

[1] *Mbh.*, Śānti Parva, 65.13-32.
[2] Junagarh Rock Ins. (of Rudradāman), *EI*, VIII, p. 42; VII, p. 257; *Lüd.*, no. 994; Kanheri Bud. Ins. (of the time of Vāś ṣṭiputra Śri-Sātakarṇi), *ASWI*, II, p. 78.
[3] D.P. Chattopadhyaya, 'Source of Indian Idealism', *HS*, p. 241.
[4] R.N. Nandi, 'Some Social Aspects of the *Gṛhya Sūtras*', *Pro. IHC*, 1977, p. 168.
[5] B.C. Law, *IDETB*, p. 161, "According to Pāli Scholiasts, *Mahāsāla* brāhmaṇas were those who were men of substance (*mahāsāra*), whose hoarded wealth amounted to eighty crores."

alised in rituals had succeeded in controlling the production of ideas and were considered the chief begetters of spiritual merit. But what seems to have specially elevated their position was the fact that in their role of lawgivers they could secure validation of political authority for the aspirant rulers.

The influence which these *śrotriya* brāhmaṇas came to wield in the social and religious spheres therefore was really extensive.[1] Gifts to them were not acts of charity or even mere religious benefactions. As seen above, these were, in fact, means of securing certain ends by the donors. It is not surprising therefore that the gifts bestowed upon them by royal patrons were excessively large in quantum and extremely opulent in quality. Our sources, especially the Epics, abound with references to excessive munificence shown by rulers towards learned brāhmaṇas and priests. Similarly the post-Mauryan inscriptions of Khāravela[2] and other Śaka[3] and Sātavāhana[4] kings eulogise the bounty displayed by them towards the brāhmaṇas. Since these royal gifts mainly comprised precious metals, gems, slaves, livestock, villages and land, i.e. items which were not of an immediately consumable kind but held long lasting value, their large quantum was bound to react on the economic status of the brāhmaṇa donee. The gift of livestock, especially cattle, in excessively large numbers at a time when it still constituted an important item of property, would have meant acquisition of so much wealth by the donee. The gift of thousands of kine,[5] no matter how exaggerated the figures may be, would still seem to be too large for satisfying the donee's individual needs. It would be only logical to presume that much of these gifted items might have been converted by beneficiaries through sale or exchange into more prestigious or atleast more easily manageable items of property.[6] The *Mahābhārata* refers to the purchase of a horse

[1]M.M. Kunte, *The Vicissitudes of Aryan Civilization in India*, pp. 202-3. *Aṇḍabhūta Jāt.*, vol. I, no. 62, p. 151. *Nānacchanda Jāt.*, vol. II, no. 289, p. 291; *Sarabhanga Jāt.*, vol. V, no. 522, p. 66.

[2]Udayagiri Cave Ins. (of Khāravela) *Lüd.*, no. 1345.

[3]Karle Cave Ins. (of the time of Nahapāṇa), *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 61, p. 171.

[4]Nānāghāt Cave Ins. (of Nāganikā), *SI*, vol. I, no. 82, p. 192.

[5]*Dūta Jāt.*, vol. II, no. 260, p. 222.

[6]B.N. Puri, *India in the Time of Pātañjali*, p. 156. (ref. contained in the *Mahābhāṣya* (I.1.2) to the same cow passed on a thousand times. "This may be an exaggeration, but it is not unusual for a brāhmaṇa to dispose of the cow which he has received from his *yajamāna* and the same is purchased again for that purpose."

by a king from a brāhmaṇa who had initially received it in gift.[1] In another passage of the same text we get reference to brāhmaṇas selling off gems acquired through dāna.[2] Similarly, the sale of land by brāhmaṇas is vouched for by the Nāsik Buddhist Cave inscription.[3] That brāhmaṇas were very often inclined to dispose off slaves acquired through gift, may be inferred from the strict injunction which forbade the brāhmaṇas from trafficking in slaves.[4]

The natural tendency on the part of brāhmaṇas to hoard gifts, finds frequent mention in the contemporary literature. According to a passage of the *Anguttara Nikāya*: "In former times, brāhmaṇas hoarded neither treasure, grain, silver nor gold; now they do these things."[5] Another Buddhist *Sutta* informs us how brāhmaṇas, "who lived on food provided by the faithful continued to be addicted to storing up property."[6] It can scarcely be doubted that these opulent gifts, to a great extent, contributed in transforming a section of the brāhmaṇas into a wealthy group,[7] very often manifesting an aristocratic air.[8] Some brāhmaṇas of great wealth and resources are even described as 'being wells unto recluses and brāhmaṇas.'[9] Expressions such as 'brāhmaṇa *addho mahādhano*,'[10] *mahābhogo*,[11] '*asitikoṭīdhana vibhava*;[12] commonly occur in the *Jātakas* for rich brāhmaṇas.[13]

The source of wealth of some of these brāhmaṇas may of course be attributed to their position as high ministers and court officials.[14] But since our data vouches for the presence of a considerably large number of rich brāhmaṇas,[15] whose intellectual pretensions must

[1]*Mbh.*, Udyoga Parva, 177.7.

[2]Ibid., Anuśāsana Parva, 67.28.

[3]Nāsik Buddhist Cave Ins., *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 59.

[4]*Āpas. Dh. Sūt.*, I.720.11-12.

[5]*Aṅg. Nik.*, V.XX.191.

[6]*Bud. Sut.*, 2. Tevigga Sutta.

[7]*Therīgāthā*, I.1.2; I.3.22.

[8]*Supra*, Brāhmaṇas and Renouncers as Receivers, p. 82.

[9]*PV*, The story of Sariputta's mother, II.2, tr., p. 169; Similar references also contained in *Śaṅkha Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 492, p. 9; *Bhīra Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 488, p. 192.

[10]*Śaṅkha Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 492, p. 9.

[11]*Culla-Bodhi Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 443, p. 14.

[12]*Kanhadīpāyana Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 444, p. 17.

[13]Fick, *Soc. Org.*, p. 244.

[14]B.C. Law, *IDETBJ*, p. 158.

[15]Ibid., p. 161.

not have allowed them to take up any non-brahmanical pursuit, hence the initial acquisition of their wealth could have been possible only in the shape of religious gifts. In the *Majjhima Nikāya* alms or gifts are described as the chief source of brāhmaṇas' income.[1]

Village-grants, which started in the post-Vedic period,[2] specially figure as an important source of brāhmaṇas' wealth. Besides the income accruing in the shape of village revenue[3] these gifts also entailed the possession of a certain amount of political and social influence over the village residents. This is clearly suggested by the numerous references contained in the Pāli texts. According to the Ambattha Sutta of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, brāhmaṇa Pokkharasadi held a royal fief granted to him by king Pasenadi of Kośala 'with power over it as if he was the king.'[4] Similarly according to the *Majjhima Nikāya* brāhmaṇa Canki lived on a royal fief granted to him outright in full seignory by the king of Kosala, 'a demesne teeming with life and abounding in grasslands, woodlands, water and cornlands.'[5] Although it was only subsequently that the grant of fuller administrative and judicial powers must have further enhanced the political authority and social consequence of the donee, begetting for him the rank of a virtual feudal lord,[6] nevertheless, the beginning of the trend may well be traced from the post-Mauryan period.

More than village-grants, it was the steadily growing practice of gifting land, both agricultural and otherwise, to learned brāhmaṇas, which transformed the latter into an influential class of landowners.[7] The *Sālikedāra Jātaka* alludes to a brāhmaṇa named Kosiyagotta,

[1]*Maj. Nik.*, Esukari Sutta, II.179.

[2]*Junhā Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 456, p. 63; *Mahāummagga Jāt.*, vol. VI, no. 546, p. 170; *Sivi Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 499, p. 250; Nānāghāt Cave Ins. (of Nāganikā) *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 82, p. 192; Nāsik Cave Ins. (of the time of Nahapāṇa), *SI*, vol. I, Bk. II, no. 59, p. 169.

[3]*Nānacchanda Jāt.*, vol. II, no. 289, p. 291. "The brahmin himself wanted to have the revenue of a village as his boon."

[4]*Dīg. Nik.*, III. Ambattha., I.2.

[5]*Maj. Nik.*, XCV. Canki Sutta, II, 164.

[6]R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism*, p. 53. "The judicial and administrative authority which the donees enjoyed must have added to their economic power over the inhabitants of the village. Hence in some respects the beneficiaries of grants may be compared to the feudal lord of the manors."

[7]B.C. Law, *IDETEJ*, p. 162. "These brāhmaṇas became rich and powerful only because of certain permanent land-grants and endowments made by the kings."

who held an estate of one thousand acres where he grew rice.[1] Gift of tax-free land to learned brāhmaṇas is recommended even by Kauṭilya,[2] who otherwise favoured the concentration of economic resources in the hands of the state in order to promote production. Perhaps the significance of the growth of a land-owning brāhmaṇa grouping may be appreciated better when we consider it in the context of a fast expanding agricultural milieu, with land figuring not only as the chief item of property but also as the main source of state revenue.

Brāhmaṇas figuring as commercial entrepreneurs: The importance of the above development, resulting from extensive landgrants to brāhmaṇas, further lies in the fact that it was perhaps the capital raised on this donated land which not only sometimes came to be invested in commercial enterprise but also might account for the subsequent wealth of the beneficiaries lasting through generations.[3] That brāhmaṇas had started venturing in the field of commercial enterprise is well borne out by our sources. We get references to brāhmaṇa *seṭṭhis*[4] and to brāhmaṇas engaged in trade and getting their goods transported in as many as five hundred wagons[5] or as moving at the head of a caravan.[6]

The accumulated wealth of a group of learned brāhmaṇas naturally created a gulf between them and their non-learned counterparts. The institution of dāna therefore may be held atleast partially responsible for causing a rift within the brāhmaṇa fold, with each grouping wielding unequal and widely different social and economic status. Our sources, especially the *Smṛti* texts, reveal how differences between the two sections manifested themselves in the form of fiscal and judicial privileges and ritual status enjoyed by the *śrotriya* brāhmaṇas.[7] Tax-exemptions on gifted land was recommended by Kauṭilya only in the case of the latter.[8] Non-learned brāhmaṇas on

[1]*Sālikedāra Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 484, p. 175; *Suvaṇṇakakkaṭa Jāt.*, vol. III, no. 389, p. 184.

[2]*As.*, II.17. 'He (king) should grant (lands) to priests, preceptors, chaplains and brāhmins, exempt from fines and taxes.'

[3]R. Fick, *Soc. Org.*, p. 244; *Kāhna Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 440, p. 5; *Śaṅkha Jāt.*, vol. IV, no. 442, p. 10.

[4]*Jayaddisa Jāt.*, vol. V, no. 513, p. 12.

[5]*Mahā-sutsoma Jat.*, vol. V, no. 537, p. 256.

[6]*Jayaddisa Jāt.*, vol. V, no. 513, p. 12.

[7]*Gaut. Dh. Sūt.*, VIII.12-13.

[8]*AŚ*, II 1.7.

the other hand were not considered fit even to partake *śrādha* offerings.[1]

The mechanism of dāna, by supporting a large non-producing *varṇa* stratum, thus made feasible the growth of the *varṇa* system which is a unique feature of Indian society. But it is even more difficult to visualise in the absence of this institution, the working of the *āśrama* scheme which required the adherents of three of the four *āśramas* to subsist solely on alms provided by the members of the fourth order, namely the *gṛhasthas* (or householders).[2] The maximum contribution of the institution was, however, to render smooth and gradual, through its dual role of social relief and redistribution of wealth, the transition from a tribal to a stratified social order.

[1]*AS*. I.15.61.
[2]*Manu*, III. 78.

Conclusion

The institution of dāna in the context of social and economic developments during the period c. 600 B.C. to A.D. 300 can scarcely be viewed in the same restricted sense of ritualistic giftmaking to religious beneficiaries, as it is commonly understood today. In the post-Vedic sources, the term dāna appears to have held a much wider connotative significance. The wide-ranging meanings attributed to it by lexicographers and grammarians reflect not only the flexibility of the institution but also emphasise its essentially formative character.

In view of different meanings attributed to it, the act of dāna would appear to entail not only the voluntary relinquishment by the donor of his proprietary hold over the gift-item but also the institution of that of the recipients over it. It might also call for a certain amount of sacrifice on the part of the former. Even the act of splitting or distribution of the gift-object would seem to be implied by the act of dāna. Such giftmaking could even aim at returning a favour, remitting a debt or creating and sustaining new and old social ties. Similarly dāna could be undertaken as much out of plain customary habit as it could be inspired by pity, love, rivalry, compassion, religious fervour, egotistical vanity, superstitious fear or some pragmatic considerations. The elasticity apparent in the meaning of the term dāna would indicate a corresponding variety in the gift-items too.

The term dāna therefore has been understood in its broadest sense of unilateral giftmaking. It comprehends not only monetary endowments and gifts of various kinds of articles to members of religious orders, but also alms to beggars or needy wayfarers, the construction of *vihāras*, alms-halls, rest-houses, wells, tanks and other works of public welfare; it would also include the dedication of pleasance gardens, votive images, pillars, *caityas* etc. which were treated as the *pūrta* category of dāna by the brahmanical lawgivers.

The institution of dāna during the period 600 B.C. to A.D. 300

seems to have undergone so much of change and development that by the end of this period it had lost much of its original Vedic character and had acquired an increasingly formalised form. Dāna in the Ṛgvedic and the later Vedic period would seem to have possessed a totally different aspect as compared to the period under study. Unlike later times, in the Vedic period dāna is not only known to have been confined mostly to occasions of big sacrifices in which almost the entire tribe participated but it was also undertaken primarily by tribal chiefs and kings and rarely by common house-holders. Since big sacrifices accompanied by ostentatious giftmaking were performed either before or at the successful conclusion of some inter-tribal war, gifts on such occasions might have been more in the form of distribution of spoils, which especially in the pastoral background of the Ṛgvedic age constituted the chief source of tribal wealth.

Chronological Stages in the Growth of the Institution of Dāna

Although the basic constituents of the giftmaking institution viz. donor, donee and gift-items appear to have escaped any drastic catabolism during the long span of eight hundred years under study, still they are found to have undergone considerable variations in keeping with the changing material culture. Even the externals of dāna making, the underlying beliefs and didactic sanctions working behind its procedural ritual, seem to have corresponded to the changed economic conditions. The very nature and extent of the popularity of the institution and its relevance to society would appear to have been directly conditioned by the state of growth reached by the various social and economic formations of the time. As in the case of all the other social institutions the change, however, was so gradual and smooth that it becomes difficult to attribute its actual occurrence to any particular point of time. Nevertheless, its development on the basis of available data, may be traced through three successive periods of history viz. pre-Mauryan, Mauryan and post-Mauryan times.

The pre-Mauryan Phase: The second and third quarters of the first millennium B.C. are characterised by rapid agricultural expansion in the middle Gangetic zone of India. This was no doubt due to the more extensive use of iron which was easily procurable from iron-ore deposits in Bihar. Even though iron technology was still far from advanced, it, none the less, promoted sedentary life and helped to

produce a surplus which was large enough to provide for a section of population not directly engaged in agricultural production. Not only a large urban population could now be fed and maintained but even certain other sections of society, which were divorced from economically productive activities, could be provided for. In fact, this circumstance explains the large number of donee groups which figure in society in the age of the Buddha. Their existence in a predominantly pastoral economy of the early Vedic period would have been almost inconceivable.

Surplus production not only helped the creation of a ruling class on the basis of taxes and army but also facilitated craft-specialisation and trade activities. But while craft-specialisation made it possible for one social section, namely the brāhmaṇas, to keep away from all producing activities, trade gave rise to its various appendages such as money-market, urban centres and a considerable mercantile community whose services were now needed for the distribution of this surplus. The appearance of a group of substantial merchants on the social scene vitally affected the institution of dāna. Besides tribal chiefs and princely rulers who had constituted the primary category of donors in the Vedic period, merchants also began to figure by the time of Buddha, as a group of potential donors.

Agricultural expansion during the second and third quarters of the first millennium B.C., besides augmenting the institution of private-property, also led to the break-up of the Vedic tribal order and a gradual lessening of the kinship ties. Consequently, whereas the growth of private property created a new category of donors viz., landed *gahapatis*, the break-up of the tribal order brought to the fore another category of donees, namely the aged and infirm beggars, who could no longer fall back on the protection provided by their tribe or near kinsmen.

The strengthening of the institution of private property added a new dimension to contemporary social life. It steadily bred a spirit of individualism which found manifestation in feelings of strong disaffection, personal insecurity and egotistical aspirations. The latter proved to be the very antithesis of Vedic collectivist ideology which had emphasised the common good of the entire tribe. This insurgent spirit of individualism, although still not so pronounced, yet had an important bearing on the institution of dāna. The growing feeling of disaffection and personal insecurity made many people renounce material comforts and join heterodox orders in order to work for

their spiritual salvation; it also made householders more solicitous about their personal welfare and hence more susceptible to providential fears. Consequently now not only a larger number of people began to subsist on alms but others also were more inclined to give alms to ensure their individual well-being. Occasions for giftmaking, therefore, in the post-Vedic period no longer remained confined only to big *Soma* sacrifices. They henceforth also included daily alms to religious mendicants and beggars as well as gifts made on occasions of sacramental rites which now began to be performed for the twice-born.

Agricultural expansion during the post-Vedic period also tended to emphasise the greater utility of cattle for purposes of tilling, husbandry and transport rather than for satisfying plain dietary needs. Ritual decimation of cattle became ungainful, their gift on the other hand could affect greater diffusion of cattle wealth. Non-killing of animals, therefore, became a watchword with the numerous heterodox sects. Sacrifices were increasingly held in disfavour, and in its place dāna was advocated by heterodox protogonists, who being mostly *bhikkhus*, were totally dependent on alms. Giftmaking as an institution, therefore, gradually ceased to be confined only to princely chieftains and their sacrificial officiants. It was instead tending to become more broad based and a form of life for the average individual. Accordingly gift-items also became more varied and were essentially in keeping with both the form of property which particular categories of donors could easily spare as gifts, as well as with the needs of various donee groups. Aspirant rulers and chiefs, continued to make on the occasion of sacrifices, ostentatious gifts such as horses, elephants, cattle, slaves, precious metal, chariots etc. but merchants and householders who needed slaves and cattle for their own personal use could ill-spare them in large numbers. The latter category of donors, therefore, tended to make gifts of a more modest type. These comprised items of daily use such as clothing, food and other finished goods. Gifts of villages by kings at this time also seem to be prompted primarily by economic considerations such as reclamation of wasteland.

Since gifts in the pre-Mauryan period were mainly made either on the occasion of sacrifices or in the shape of daily alms, procedural ritual connected with dāna was essentially simple. Whatever giftmaking ritual is known to exist during this time was essentially an extension of the sacrificial ritualism.

In the time of Buddha, use of money currency is proved by archaeological evidence and affirmed by literary sources; an incipient money economy had definitely made its beginning. As such it would be wrong to presume that giftmaking served the purpose of exchange in any positive manner during the post-Vedic period. The only exchange with reference to dāna was henceforth in terms of spiritual merit. The purifying, ennobling and status enhancing effect of dāna making now became increasingly emphasised. However, as evidence from the *Mahābhārata* would suggest, giftmaking when undertaken by ruling chieftains on occasions of big sacrifices might have occasionally served a redistributive function.

In the post-Vedic material milieu, surplus production led to the gradual emergence of two distinct economic groupings, the producers and the organisers of production. As the surplus tended to become concentrated with the organisers comprising chiefly the ruling kṣatriyas, some priestly sections and the members of mercantile community, the producers i.e. the peasants and the artisans were left with only a minimal portion of their produce. A segment of the population was neither concerned with production nor with its management. In the new situation the aged, the infirm and the destitute fell victims to economic hardships and adverse social circumstances. However the ascetics and the monks seem to have voluntarily renounced all economic activities. Giftmaking in the form of sacrificial offerings to brāhmaṇas and of alms to beggars and monks, therefore, served the purpose of diverting some of this surplus towards those who did not fall within any of these two important economic classes.

The Mauryan Phase: Consequent to economic developments of the preceding age, which were gradually becoming more pronounced during the period of the Mauryas, the need to organise production became so imperative that the state itself had to step in. It sought to achieve this by organising and improving the condition of producers. Consequently, the material welfare of slaves and hired labourers became an important concern of the state, and much of its energy and resources were now directed towards that end. State measures to better the condition of slaves and waged labour, however, resulted in a further decrease in popularity of slaves as gift-items. The Mauryan state policy of agricultural expansion on the other hand, besides encouraging gift of waste land, also popularised works of public welfare undertaken by both the state and the people. Digging of wells, tanks, planting of trees, repairing of roads etc. henceforth came to be

exalted as a *pūrta* category of dāna by the lawgivers.

Similarly the sacrificial decimation of animals was now disfavoured as a state policy. Sacrificial ritualism became discredited. Dāna now increasingly replaced the cult of sacrifice. There was a proportional increase in the number of both donor and donee categories. *Gahapatis* as a category of donors became prominent. The number of small kings making sacrificial offerings decreased. As head of the state the king emerged as the chief category of donor. His kinsmen and bureaucratic subordinates, although still forming a relatively small group, none the less, figured as additional categories of donors.

The post-Mauryan Phase: Attempts on the part of the Mauryan state at organising and controlling production were not very effective in the long run. After the break-up of the Mauryan empire and with the Bactrian Greeks, the Scythians and the Kuṣāṇas appearing on the political and social horizon, we meet with a vastly changed socio-economic situation. During the post-Mauryan period, not only do we come cross foreigners in large numbers but also notice an unprecedented increase in overall production to have caused a great spurt in internal and external trade. The organisation of craft-production and trade through guilds, the growth of new urban centres linked by busy trade-routes, the appearance of an improved and extensive metal currency and inflow of large quantities of gold from the west were some economic developments which had significant bearing on the institution of dāna.

Now foreigners and corporate bodies such as guilds and the Buddhist *Saṁgha* figured as additional categories of donors, and the affluence and strength gained by artisanal and mercantile classes created disparities between their economic competence on the one hand and their social and ritual status on the other. This made social readjustments necessary. Thus even though the śūdras had all along been denied giftmaking right, yet the newly won riches of some of them during the post-Mauryan period forced the lawgivers to review and reassess their social status and concede to them, however grudgingly, the right to make dāna under certain limited circumstances. The new economic competence of artisans and merchants made them at this time a prominent category of donors patronising more specially the heterodox orders.

A further development of the institution of private property, while engendering a spirit of individualism amongst the people in general, also brought to the fore landowning *gahapatis* and *seṭṭhis* as impor-

tant groups of donors. The growing urbanised mode of living also gave rise to the practice of donors belonging to a particular town or locality clubbing toghether to make gifts. Categories of donors whom we come across during the post-Mauryan period are far more varied and much more broad-based as compared to earlier times.

The impact of the new economic situation on gift-items is even more marked. Land, both agricultural and residential, was becoming increasingly popular as an item of gift. Considering its permanent and great value, gifts of land improved the economic position of not just the donee alone but also of the latter's succeeding generations. Laws relating to reclamation, alienation and inheritance of the gifted land became more elaborate. Similarly in the relationship in which peasants working on the gifted piece of land stood to the beneficiary now required further elucidation by lawgivers. The gift of cultivated land by kings, moreover, meant alienation of a lasting source of revenue for the state.

The growing demand for slaves and wage-labour to work on agricultural fields, as well as the increasing importance of cattle and drought-animals for purposes of husbandry and transport, naturally further detracted from their earlier popularity as gift-items. Likewise, while increased commodity production added to the popularity of finished goods as gift-items, the urbanised mode of living seems to have popularised the gift of cooked food. A spurt in traffic on highways made construction of rest-houses and wells by rich donors an important economic necessity. Purchasing goods for giftmaking became common, just as gifts of gold and coined money came to be extensively made. The growing commercial spirit of the age is perhaps best reflected in the practice of making permanent endowments in favour of charitable and religious bodies. These permanent endowments entailed the enjoyment of only regular interest by the beneficiary while the capital amount remained invested with some guild. Gifts now also comprised installation of votive images, pillars, gateways etc. The construction of *caityas* and cave-dwelling for monks became exceedingly popular. Such gifts reflect greater religious fervour on the part of the donors as well as their desire to make gifts, yielding more lasting and greater spiritual merit.

Despite the Śuṅga-Kaṇva attempt to resuscitate the sacrificial cult, it became increasingly discredited in the commerce-oriented milieu of the post-Mauryan period. Consequently brāhmaṇas' dependence on dāna increased manifold. Brāhmaṇas had become numerically also a

much larger grouping to subsist wholly on gifts. With donors of foreign origin, merchants, artisans and even some brahmanical rulers, extending patronage more to heterodox orders, especially to the Buddhist *Saṁgha*, the position of brāhmaṇas as donee became more precarious in the post-Mauryan period.

The growing size of various categories of donees as well as the spirit of competition manifest amongst them produced two major repercussions. It split the brāhmaṇas into two groups, both ill-disposed towards each other. It also gave rise to a complex procedure connected with the act of giftmaking. In order to strengthen their claims as donees over those of heterodox monks, the brahmanical lawgivers sought to restore their former esteem by emphasising Vedic learning as an essential qualification for a brāhmaṇa to be a worthy receptacle of dāna. Accordingly those brāhmaṇas who were not well-versed in Vedic knowledge and pursued non-brahmanical occupations began to be looked down upon by their learned counterparts, who not only claimed all fiscal and judicial privileges and immunities for themselves but also appropriated much wealth in the form of dāna. Thus on account of new affluence gained by some brāhmaṇas through ostentatious gifts, as well as consequent to economic expediency created by rivalry amongst various donee groups, the brāhmaṇa *varṇa* now became split into two distinct groupings, divided by their respective intellectual and economic competence.

Greater emphasis now began to be laid on the qualifications of both the donor and the donee, so that those who did not possess these qualifications might be eliminated from the whole process of dāna. Complex rules pertaining to occasions and the manner of making and receiving gifts also began to be framed for the same purpose by both brahmanical and heterodox leaders. The former tended to make the correct performance of dāna more complex, which ensured the engagement of the services of brāhmaṇa priests. Procedural complexities related to dāna may have arisen also due to the heavy induction of non-Vedic rites and practices into Brahmanism. The process of cultural syncretism would seem to have been especially boosted by the expansion of territorial and cultural frontiers during the Mauryan period. Thus, as a result of a gradual process of economic development, social change and cultural assimilation, by the end of A.D. 300 dāna had already acquired a dominant ritualistic procedure and a restricted formalised aspect.

The general impression that the institution of dāna in India could have had a limited religious bearing, therefore, cannot be upheld. Dāna cannot be treated as an exclusively religious institution divorced from the social and economic tenor of life. It contributed to intellectual awakening and cultural renaissance, served as the chief support for religious reform movements, but the institution all along had firm roots in the material culture of India. Its changing form not only mirrored the progressive changes occurring in the social and economic pattern, but because of the practice of giftmaking these transitions were rendered smooth.

APPENDIX

Rise of Monastic System

All heterodox leaders recommended renunciation of worldly life as an essential step to spiritual advancement. The principle was by no means a special innovation of the heterodox sects. But an important difference characterised the life of a heterodox renouncer and distinguished it from that of his brahmanical counterpart. The term *saṁyāsin* used for brahmanical recluse, means one who has completely cast off all things from himself. As such the latter's break off from society was complete.[1] He was mostly known to retire into forests where he lived entirely on whatever fruits and roots he could gather.[2] The heterodox monks, on the other hand, while renounced family life and all material pursuits were still required to subsist on alms provided by the lay believers. It was their dependence on alms (*bhikṣā*), which earned for them the name '*bhikṣu.*'

What further distinguished the Buddhist *bhikkhus* from *saṁyāsins* and emphasised still more the former's complete dependence on lay folk's generosity was the Buddhist practice of observing 'rain-retreat' (*varṣā-vāsa*). Although it was common for all wandering ascetics to stay at one place during the rainy season,[3] yet Buddhist monks, unlike their counterparts of the other sects, were required to 'live together' in congregation at one place.[4] The practice necessarily called for a definite place of residence for monks, which was both marked off by fixed boundaries and was also not very far removed from civilization

[1]Y. Krishan, 'Decline of Buddhism in India', *VIJ*, II, 1964; R. Thapar, 'Renunciation: A counter culture', *AISH*, pp. 64-65.

[2]*Mbh.*, Śānti Parva, 235; Aśvamedhika Parva, 46.11, '*phalapatravarairmūlaiḥ śyāmakeṇa ca vartayan.*'

[3]*Sukhavihāri Jāt.*, vol. I, no. 10, p. 33.

[4]S. Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India*, p. 54. "The Buddhist idea of rain-retreat seems to have been not to live anywhere or alone and companionless or in promiscuous company but to settle in a congregation of fellow-monks."

to make alms-seeking difficult. But whereas settlements in the countryside (*āvāsas*) could be built and maintained by the monks themselves,[1] those in or near a town or city had to be necessarily provided and maintained by wealthy lay devotees owning private parks or pleasure gardens (*ārāmas*). It was therefore the important practice of 'rain-retreat' prescribed by Buddha which later not only transformed his followers from a body of wanderers (*parivrājaka*) into a settled cenobitical order, but also made them more overtly dependent on benefactions of the laity. The very growth of the Buddhist *Saṁgha* would be thus found to be sustained through the institution of religious giftmaking.[2]

Right since the time of Buddha, a chain of monastic establishments (*saṁghārāmas*) came up as a result of munificent endowments made by kings, rich *seṭṭhis* and *gahapatis*.[3] The earliest *ārāma* to be gifted to Buddha and the *Saṁgha* was Veluvanārāma at Rājagaha.[4] It was the gift of king Bimbisāra of Magadha. Another well-known *ārāma* at Rājagaha was the gift of the noted physician Jivaka.[5] The gift of famous Jetavanārāma near Savatthi by the rich merchant Anāthapiṇḍika, of course, finds repeated mention in contemporary texts.[6] Perhaps equally celebrated was the gift of a monastery by the *seṭṭhi* named Ghoṣita.[7] On his visits to Kosāmbi, Buddha is said to have stayed at this monastery in preference to Kukkuṭārāma and Pavārikāmbavana, built by two other *seṭṭhis*. The Āmbapālivana was donated to the *Saṁgha* by the well-known courtesan of Vaiśāli, Āmbapāli.[8] Legends credit Aśoka with the construction of as many as eighty-four thousand monasteries.[9] Not only the wealthy but even ordinary lay folks are known to undertake the construction of *vihāras* or residential quarters for the monks. From *Cullavagga* we learn how

[1]S. Dutt, op. cit., p. 54.

[2]D.K. Barua, *Vihāras in Ancient India*, p. 12.

[3]*CV*, VI.1.4.

[4]*MV*, I.22.17-18; D.K. Barua, *Vihāras in Ancient India*, p. 12. "Liberal royal grants as well as public donations helped much to the establishment of the Buddhist monasteries from as early as the sixth century B.C. A merchant (*seṭṭhi*) of Rājagaha is said to have built 60 *vihāras* for the monks in one day (*Cullavagga*, VI.1 4)."

[5]*Dīg. Nik.*, II. Samannaphala Sutta, I.1.

[6]*MV*, III.5.6; *CV*, VI.4.8.10: *Dh. Pada*, Bk. 9, Story 4.

[7]Ibid., Bk. 2, Story 1.

[8]*MV*, VI.30.5.

[9]J. Przyluski, *The Legend of Emperor Aśoka*, tr. D.K. Biswas, p. 70.

the people began to build *vihāras* zealously on learning that Buddha had allowed the monks to reside in them.[1] The same text also tells of a poor tailor as well as lady Viśākhā undertaking the construction of such *vihāras*.[2] Reference to construction of *vihāras* by lay followers are also contained in the *Dhammapada*[3] and *Theragāthā*.[4]

The provision and maintenance of these permanent places of residence for monks by lay donors inevitably wrought certain significant changes in the mode of a monk's life as well as in the organization of the *Saṁgha*.[5] Since meals and other articles of daily requirement for *bhikkhus* came to be deposited by donors at the *Sāṁghārāma* itself, the need for monks to go on daily alms round must have become considerably less. This was a significant development, for it lessened monk's contact, even direct association and involvement with the lay devotees. Yet another development related to the lavish endowments of land to the monasteries was the greater secularisation of the *Saṁgha*. "There was a consequent decline in its concern with providing salvation for the lay community and an increase in its concern for acquiring and maintaining authority."[6]

The history of the Buddhist *Saṁgha* is known to be affected and conditioned by the institution of giftmaking in other ways also. The proselytising zeal evinced by the order right from the time of its inception and which later transformed Buddhism into a world religion, may be directly linked with the munificence shown towards it by royal benefactors, especially Bimbisāra, Ajātaśatru, Aśoka and Kaniṣka.

[1] *CV*, VI.2.1.

[2] Ibid., VI.5.1; VI.14.1.

[3] *Dh. Pada*, Bk. 2. Story 1, "The treasurer Ghoṣaka erected Ghoṣita monastery, the treasurer Kukkuta erected Kukkuta monastery, and the treasurer Pāvāriya erected Pāvāriya monastery."

[4] *Theragāthā*, canto II, pt. I, CXXXII, tr., p. 119.

[5] S. Dutt, op. cit., p. 92.

[6] R. Thapar, *AISH*, p. 73.

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SUBJECT

PROPER NAMES

PĀLI, PRĀKRIT, SANSKRIT AND ALLIED WORDS

Errata

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